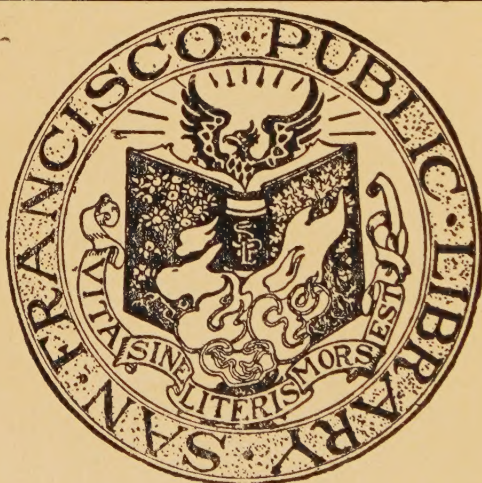


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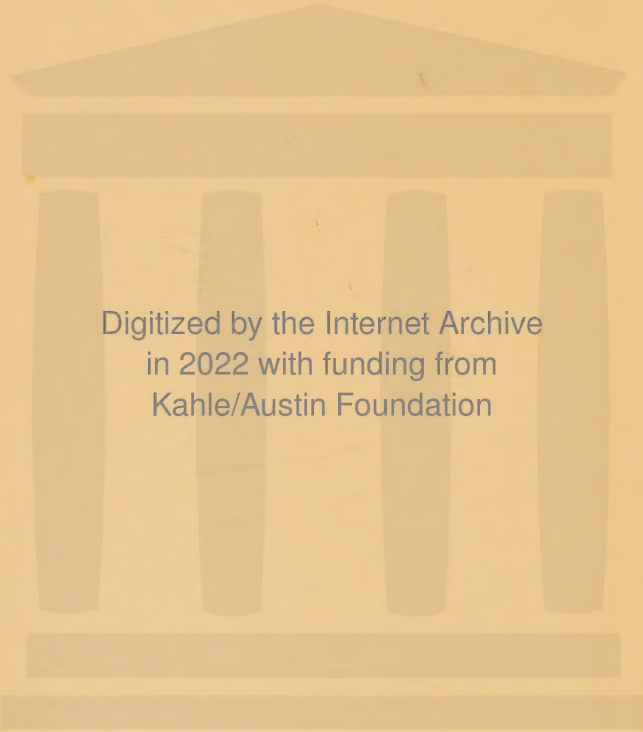
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Letters of Sarah Byng Osborn

THE STANFORD MISCELLANY

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*The Honble M^{rs} Osborn
Daughter of Viscount Torrington
and Wife to John Osborn, Esq*

Letters of
Sarah Byng Osborn

1721—1773

FROM THE COLLECTION OF
THE HON. MRS. McDONNEL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND FURTHER NOTES

By JOHN McCLELLAND

Instructor in English, Stanford University

1930

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FOREWORD

THIS volume, the second in the Stanford Miscellany, preserves not only the familiar and the formal communications of a most intelligent and sprightly lady, but memorials of a House already dear and well-known to most English readers. The seventeenth-century Osborns of Chicksands, and Chicksands itself, live yet in the winning, merry letters of Mistress Dorothy Osborn to William Temple, whose wife she became after a course of lonely years as full of parental frowns, patient dignity, and devoted attachment as any romance could produce; Mistress Dorothy's letters are those of an Osborn, but also those of an enchanting girl, alive to the beauty and the drama of life in the old priory where the family had become rooted. The letters of this present volume are those of a lady as well bred, as spirited, as humorously perceptive, as if she were blood kin to Dorothy Osborn instead of wife to Dorothy's great-nephew—after all, the two were brought up under the same disciplines and traditions—but instead of the letters of a girl, we have here, like a pretty sequel, the letters of a mature woman with the responsibilities of a family and a wide acquaintance in the World. Unlike Jane Austen, that other intelligent charmer, who, as Chesterton properly says, did not turn her head to look out of window at the French Revolution, Sarah Osborn, born Byng, missed nothing of what went on outside her household or within,

and her succinct comment makes these things spring up immediately fresh and living; her letters are indeed a mirror in her breast, where we may see reflected a shrewd and healthy mind, the familiar habits of an eighteenth-century gentlewoman, and the affairs of a period dangerous, dignified, and diverting.

M. B.

INTRODUCTION



OUR generation has now for some time displayed an uncommonly lively and sympathetic curiosity concerning details of the domestic life of the past. The source of this interest is engaging the attention of those who seek to explain fashions in reading. Has such curiosity its springs in our nobler or in our less noble instincts? Do we like to read about the pots and pans of our ancestors, their gout and their disappointments in love, their small deceptions, their small triumphs, because of a quickened awareness of the mingled pathos and dignity of ordinary human existence, or merely because of a sharpened appetite for gossip?

The question is an interesting one, but this is not the place for a discussion of it. It is enough for our purpose to insist that the interest displayed today in the personalities of the past is a real one and is the sufficient excuse for reprinting the collection of letters which follows.

For the interest that attaches to the letters of Mrs. Osborn is personal, and not literary. They are valuable because they present a vivid, if incomplete, picture of a personality, and of a period, depicting many aspects of a social system now in great part passed completely away. Those were the days when newspapers, as we know them, were not; when people had to depend almost entirely upon their friends for news; when rapid transportation was a

thing undreamed of, and whole sections of "good society" lived year in and year out in the country; when the success or failure of crops was of paramount importance; when country families had to wait for the new moon before they could see to go to dine with their neighbors.

In these letters Mrs. Osborn introduces us into a whirl of everyday personal and domestic activities. Visits are exchanged; noblemen's "seats" are inspected and criticized; farmers and domestic servants are hired, appraised, commended, suspected; schemes are agitated for hastening dilatory lawyers; houses are refitted; furniture is bought; the tale of housekeeping expenses is entered upon at length. "I feel like Martha, careful and troubled about many things," Mrs. Osborn writes to her son, at the time of his marriage, when her letters are a maze of anxious memoranda concerning chimneys and chairs, and fish and faggots.

Commonplace domestic detail, then, and the everlasting problem of making both ends meet, enliven—or, if your taste is not for realism, clutter up—these pages. But Mrs. Osborn was not solely preoccupied with domestic cares. She took a lively gossiping interest in the affairs, particularly the matrimonial affairs, of her friends and acquaintances. Her good nature was tintured at times by a mild strain of not unpleasing malice. ". . . Mrs. Becher . . . was a good fortune, though a brewer's daughter at Hackney, so you may imagine she is nothing extraordinary; but Mr. Becher will have money to build a new house, and those are, they say, the chief ingredients towards a happy life." (" . . . money . . . and those are . . ."? Mrs. Osborn was no cowering slave of syntax. By her own testimony an inveterate correspondent, she writes as a rule correctly enough, but when her interest is aroused she lets her pen gallop with small regard for syntactical consequences.)

The personality of their author shows very distinctly through these letters. Recalcitrant farmers and lawyers she had early to learn to manage, and probably not so much finesse was required for the business; but more subtle, more delicate problems naturally arose in her dealings with her son and her grandsons. Such difficulties she encountered with a discretion truly admirable. When she heard that young Sir Danvers, the son whom she alone had reared from infancy, was keeping too late hours at Cambridge, she "got at" him, not directly, but through his uncle. "You may tell him that you met with a person who came from Cambridge and that they told you of his bad hours Give half an hour of your time to write a little good advice to him. . . . They think women and parsons don't know the world, and that it is manly to keep such hours." And, again, writing directly to her son concerning business matters: ". . . . I should be prodigious sorry anyone should know I pretend to offer my opinion to you. . . . A mother is the last person that other people will allow the privilege, and therefore whatever she says should die in your own breast."

Could anything be more discreet? Later, she can be seen employing the same tact in holding her vacillating younger grandson to his appointed career in the diplomatic service.

Mrs. Osborn knew the world—in both the narrow and the broader senses of that term. The major portion of her later life was passed in London, for she was too prudent a dowager to attempt to share the governance of Chicksands, the family seat, with daughter-in-law or with granddaughter-in-law. So it was that she happened to be in London during the '45; during the Wilkes uproar; during

the decadence of the great Pitt. Some of the brightest pages of this volume are those in which this lady sketches the panic that, before Culloden, swooped upon the proud city. As a close connection, through marriage, of the Halifax family, she took a keen interest in the struggles of the great Whig oligarchy, rent by internal faction, against the Tories and the "King's Party." The moves and counter-moves of Chatham and Bedford and North, the shameless bidding for boroughs, the Wilkes controversy—her pages are studied with references to these things. And though she was but "a wretched woman" (and "women are fools," as she ironically comments from time to time), she is shrewdly correct in her judgment of the violent social changes taking place in her long day and of the serious consequences to be expected from the quarrel with the American colonies.

Now for an outline of the events of her life. Mrs. Osborn—or rather, to speak by the book, the Hon. Mrs. Osborn—was the only surviving daughter of Admiral Sir George Byng, a distinguished naval officer, who in 1721 was created Viscount Torrington. (A descendant of his, Viscount Byng of Vimy, won great distinction as a military commander during the war of 1914-1918.) Our letter writer, Sarah Byng, was born in October 1693 at Southill, in Bedfordshire. She was not quite seventeen years old when she married, in August 1710, John Osborn, eldest son of Sir John Osborn, Bart., of Chicksands Priory, in the same county. (Osborn, and Chicksands Priory!—these are names that figure already in the handbooks of literature: Sarah Byng became, through her marriage, a connection of the celebrated Dorothy Osborn Temple, who had died when Sarah was still an infant.)

John Osborn died in January 1719, leaving his wife,

now twenty-five, with two sons: Danvers, aged three, and John, less than one year old, destined to outlive his father less than six months. Three other children had died in infancy: people had many children, people lost many children, six generations ago.

Mrs. Osborn's father-in-law, Sir John, was getting too old to transact much business; he had, besides, a numerous young family of his own, by a second marriage, to provide for. Sarah Osborn found herself, therefore, charged with the handling of her husband's extensive debts; moreover, the death of Sir John, in 1720, left her the guardianship of her young son, now Sir Danvers, whose estates were put into Chancery.

During the sixteen years that elapsed before Sir Danvers attained his majority, Mrs. Osborn assumed entire direction of his property. She familiarized herself with all the necessary details of farm management and of legal procedure, and, with the assistance and advice of her father and her brother Robert, she so successfully conducted affairs that she was able to turn over her son's estates to him, when he reached manhood, in a greatly improved condition. (It will be observed that most of her early letters include continual mention of these matters.)

Sir Danvers Osborn, in September 1740, married Lady Mary Montagu, fourth daughter of George Montagu, first Earl of Halifax of the second creation.¹ This lady died three years later, at the birth of her second child, John. An elder son, George, had been born in 1742.

¹ The Hon. Mrs. McDonnell, the original editor of these letters, describes Lady Mary as being the daughter of George Montagu Dunk, second Earl of Halifax. This second Lord Halifax was not himself born until 1716; Lady Mary Osborn was his sister.

Mrs. Osborn was now again charged with the care of two infant boys. Her son, Sir Danvers, seems never to have completely recovered from the sorrow occasioned by his wife's early death. He traveled restlessly from place to place, and died eventually in America, when governor of New York colony, in 1753.² His death extended his mother's responsibilities. At the age of sixty she had again to assume the management of a large estate, and to oversee the education and the direction of two boys, though again not without capable masculine assistance, this time in the person of her grandsons' uncle, the second Lord Halifax.

She was to encounter additional family calamities. In June 1756 the second son of her favorite brother, Robert Byng, perished miserably in the Black Hole at Calcutta. (None of her letters for the year 1756 are published, and no mention of this event will be found in this correspondence.) In January 1757 her fourth brother, Admiral John Byng, was sentenced to death by court-martial for neglect of duty, and shot at Portsmouth—"in order to encourage the others," says Voltaire, immortalizing this tragic happening in a pungent epigram.

The justice of Admiral Byng's sentence is still a matter of some dispute. The casual reader of today will console himself with the reflection of the gentle priest of whom Renan tells us—that it all happened a long time ago; but to Mrs. Osborn, then (at sixty-three) the sole survivor of Admiral Byng's immediate family, this catastrophe might well have proved crushing. Her vigorous character and great intelligence withstood the blow, as is shown by the

² So says Burke. Mrs. McDonnell fixes the date of the death of Sir Danvers as 1750.

verve and vitality of the final group of her existing letters, dating from 1766 to the close of her life, and addressed chiefly to her younger grandson, John Osborn, a suckling diplomat, evidently somewhat dissatisfied with the course his career was taking—bored with small Italian courts; indifferent (his grandmother could not but wonder at it) even to his close proximity to smoking Vesuvius.

Mrs. Osborn survived to what the story-book writers of long ago liked to call a green old age. She lived to rejoice in the birth of a great-grandson, and died at eighty-two.

The energy of this lady, her vivacity, her zest for living, entitle her to our respect. She was not bookish; she indulged, so far as we know, in no intellectual speculations, in no spiritual yearnings. Much of her correspondence is occupied merely with discussion of the worldly condition and the worldly expectations of her family. Much of it is filled, as we have already remarked, with minutiae of the social or domestic life of her time. Much of it, again, is concerned with mention of figures who bulked large in the foreground of her day—Chatham and Bedford, Grafton and Wilkes, not to mention the Duchess of This and Lady Mary That. But there are other figures in these pages, other things, humble and obscure occurrences that even now, across the generations, touch the fancy.

“The same evening Thom. Green rode Magot to water, and led the blind one, who soon began to plunge and turn round several times. . . . Green at last obliged to quit the halter. The workmen and all ran to help, but could not save him or get him out till he was dead. The same day the grey horse was taken with a fever. Ben Squire attended him three weeks and then he died.”

“Murther’s odd jobs were double what you expected, and the carpenter did not end till Michaelmas day, and came to more

also: the one three shillings and the other four shillings. Extraordinary."

"Commissioner Osborn also is in grief for his only son, George. He was a puny boy, and not like to have a spirit for this world, but a parent feels the affliction, and cannot alleviate by such reflections."

"I cannot think what can become of [your Aunt Jekyll's] daughter . . . to whom she is an irreparable loss: to poor Miss Roberts her companion also, though she lived like a toad under a harrow. . . . Her violent temper was a misfortune, but who is without fault?"

Such things are the stuff of everyday life, in any land, in any time. They stir the imagination, because they are common to all. They stir the sympathies, because the memory of them is so evanescent. Green and the blind horse, the grey horse and Ben Squire; Murther, the doer of odd jobs, and George Osborn, the Commissioner's puny son; Aunt Jekyll of the violent temper, and "poor Miss Roberts"—all these, man and woman, and boy and beast, were whirled away irrevocably by the stream of time, did not their figures gleam to our sight for a moment, tantalizingly, arrestingly, from the pages of these old letters.

The selection of Mrs. Osborn's letters here reprinted was originally edited in 1890, by one of her descendants, Miss Emily F. D. Osborn, subsequently the Hon. Mrs. McDonnel, who herself died in 1925. To her agreeable prefatory notice to the letters, the present editor is indebted for most of the biographical data included here. Mrs. McDonnel explains, in the course of her introductory remarks (dated from Chicksands Priory):

"In conclusion, I beg to offer grateful thanks to the Duke of Bedford and to Lord Stafford, for the help they have afforded me, and for the loan of documents and letters. The originals of

twenty-one of the latter are at Wrotham. The remainder are in the possession of my father, Sir George Osborn."

Mrs. Osborn wrote, as we have already hinted, with a certain indifference to the niceties of orthography, punctuation, and syntax. Mrs. McDonnel, in her edition of the letters, preserved all these eccentricities of form. In reprinting the letters, it has seemed advisable to modernize the spelling and the punctuation. In some places a word or a phrase (inclosed in brackets) has been added to disentangle Mrs. Osborn's meaning. A few orthographical puzzles, duly indicated, eluded the perspicacity of Mrs. McDonnel, and elude ours equally.

Mrs. McDonnel's introductory explanations to certain of the letters have likewise been retained by the present editor. A few slight emendations or additions to these have also been inclosed in brackets.

JOHN MCCLELLAND

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA
May 15, 1930

Letters of Sarah Byng Osborn

1719

The first document, according to date, in Mrs. Osborn's handwriting, is the following statement of her affairs at the time of her husband's death, including a copy of his will. The Mr. Peter Osborn referred to is the half-brother of her late husband.

BY AN order drawn up by Mr. Townshend is to pay to Mr. Peter Osborn £400 a year for keeping Sir John Osborn in clothes, house, servants, horses, and in short, everything (his sickness excepted) that shall be wanted at Chicksands, and he gives him direction to pay me fourscore pound a year for keeping my children, there being no provision for them till their grandfather dies the gardens we have let to a man for £30 a year, and he is to find everything without more expense to us.

Mr. Osborn has debts of all kinds out against him, executions and all sorts of bonds and engagements, but Mr. Townshend is of opinion that, as he was not possessed of anything when he died, neither his father nor heirs can be obliged to pay anything, but his creditors seem to have other hopes

I have took an inventory of all his goods, and locked them up at Chicksands, for nobody as yet has attempted to



seize them. His horses I could not keep; so by Mr. Townshend's advice, I gave notice to the Under Sheriff (who had three executions lodged against him) that Sir John had let all his grounds round here, and the horses would go stray; so upon that he sent for them. The landlord of his chambers in the Temple has seized there, but I first had an inventory of all there, for that will be required of me to do, for if they ever do give us trouble, as to be sure they will (for everybody will not lose contentedly), I shall be brought to a strict oath for everything that did belong to him. I have myself engaged at several times for about £500. Law cannot oblige me to pay it, but as most of it is to relations and friends, I think myself obliged to pay it as soon as possible. I have engaged my honor, and that was all they could tie me by; therefore I shall save every penny I can to pay it as soon as possible, but fear I shall not compass it under two year, for all of it is at present upon interest, which I have hitherto exactly paid

When I found Mr. Osborn ill, by Mr. Townshend's advice I had a will drawn by him which I hoped to prevail with him to sign, but could not; however, he gave Norris the same will which I had given him, writ out in his own hand, but neither signed nor dated, nor the names writ plain, and bid him give it me after he was dead, and tell me it was his will It is as follows—

“This is the last Will and Testament of me, John Osborn of Chicksands in the County of Bedford. I give unto my loving wife Mrs. Sarah Osborn all my jewels, plate, and watches, and all other ornaments she has usually worn, and the sum of one hundred pounds for mourning; all the rest and residue of my personal estate of what nature or kind soever I give and devise to my said wife and unto her father the Honble. G. Byng, Kt. and Baronet, upon trust,

out of the same to raise and pay all such sums of money as I shall justly owe unto any person or persons whatsoever And pay the sum of five thousand pounds unto my youngest son John I give and devise the residue and remainder of my said goods and chattels and personal estate unto my eldest son Danvers, his executors and administrators, in witness whereof I the said John Osborn have to this my last will and testament set my hand and seal this day of September, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighteen."

1 7 2 1 — 1 7 2 3

LETTER I

The originals of the first seventeen letters, also Nos. 19, 20, 22, and 23, are in Lord Strafford's collection at Wrotham. Letters 18 and 21 are among those at Chick-sands Priory.

The Strafford letters are all addressed to the Hon. Robert Byng, Sarah's third brother, then Paymaster of the Navy. The first is dated little more than two years after her husband's death, and about eighteen months after that of Sir John Osborn. Sir Danvers was at this time not six years old. Sarah is evidently passing a few weeks at Bristol and Bath with her eldest brother, Pattee Byng, and entering into the amusements going on at both places.

BRISTOL, June 24, 1721

I must beg the favor of my dear Brother Robin to put these letters into the post for me. I am very troublesome



to you but hope you excuse it. Your last letter gave me great satisfaction to hear about my affairs, for I am so far from them that I am almost out of patience, not to be better satisfied. I have writ to Sly to pay you some rent. I believe it will be about £36 We have been to see Mr. Southwell's house, which is within five mile of this place. Vanbrugh was the architect, and a clumsy lump of building it is; it cost fifteen or twenty thousand pound without gardens, and there is no good room in it. Little doors, windows, and staircase, a prodigious large house, but all the room taken up in thick walls and clumsy pillars. The prospect is to the Severn, which is very pleasant with the addition of the ships that are anchored there. The gardens are nothing—neither do I believe they can make any; it is such a stony soil that nothing can grow, and rocks all about. Ratcliff Church we have also seen, which I believe is the finest in England. It is in this city and should be a pattern for all that are built. It was founded by a priest in Edward III's time, but newly adorned in Queen Anne's, which I cannot but say is extreme fine, but I am not fond of churches in that manner. The altar is [so] adorned with painting, gilding, and carving that it comes so near a popish church that my brother said he could not but fancy himself abroad. Besides these churches they have several fine buildings, as Merchants' Hall [and] the Custom House, which we have not seen yet.

Thursday we had a ball. The gentlemen borrowed the Long Room at the Custom House; nine couple, and as the gentlemen balloted for their partners they did not all suit well, but as follows:

Mr. Byng

Lady Theresa Throckmorton, Duke Powis' daughter

Mr. Paulet

Mrs. Bloomer, a parson's wife, young, pretty, and silly
 Sir Robert Throckmorton
 Mrs. Player
 Major Dean .
 Lady Jenkinson, a very agreeable lady—your brother says
 like Duchess Termoti
 Captain Rowley
 Mrs. Fleming, a very agreeable lady
 Mr. Jennings
 Mrs. Jenkinson
 Lieut. of Capt. Rowley's ship, the worst there, which fell
 to my lot
 Capt. Wilson
 Mrs. Craythorn, your brother's partner in the last ball
 Mr. Parsons
 Mrs. Snow

LETTERS
 OF
 SARAH
 BYNG
 OSBORN



Thus I have given you a description of our diversions
 here, but Monday sennight I find my father comes, and
 then we shall grow grave; at present we amuse ourselves
 much. This is all the account I can give you at present,
 and must conclude, dear Robin,

 your affect. sister and
 obliged humble servant,
 S. OSBORN

LETTER II

BATH, 30 August 1721

I thank my dear Brother Robin for all the trouble I
 have given you, and since my necklace cannot be found,
 I must be contented and am concerned I have given you
 so much trouble to please my vanity You will be



surprised at my father coming to town so soon, but an express came down from Sir George Saunders for him, upon Lech[mere?] being made a lord, which was contrary to all promises made to him that any should be so till his patent had passed. He will be in town a Friday; he went in by coach this morning. Now I must tell you the diversions of this place. Last Thursday we came here; that night a play bespoke by Lady Harold, so we did not see anybody; next day a ball where we was, and saw all the great ladies. My Brother Byng danced French dances with Mrs. Key, who has seven thousand a year settled on her, and country dances with Lady Jemima Grey, Duke Kent's daughter. We left them dancing and went with some ladies to Lindsey's, where I sat down to guinea commerce with Duchess of Wharton, Lady Harold, Mrs. Sims (Lord Morton's daughter), Mr. Cook (Vice Chamberlain's brother), General Stanwix's lady, Mrs. Bradshaw, Lady Lucy, myself, etc.: the pool seven guineas and I very near winning of it.

Saturday was a play bespoke by Lady Bristol. She asked us to go, as we accordingly did, but first went to make a visit with my father to Lady Franklin; in the meantime came to see me the Duchess of Wharton, Lady Bristol, Lady Lucy, and more of our ladies, which was a particular favor, they not being of my acquaintance before, and what is very seldom done in these places. Sunday to church and to return all my visits, then in to Harrison's room, where was a vast number of people, but I, being not well, came home by eight and went to bed. Next day forced myself out, not being willing to indulge; met all our great ladies at Lindsey's, and was visited by Lady Harold, Mrs. Car, and Mrs. Andrews, but so ill I was forced to come home early with a violent cold, and was in a fever all night, and yesterday [so] much worse with sore throat and pain in



my side that I was forced to be blooded, and am today much better. Thus I have told you how we have spent each day here like a real gossip, but as I believe you are pretty well dull in town, I am willing to divert you the best I can. My brother's clothes are extreme handsome and fit him exact. He has been at two balls in his paduasoy, so I think he cuts a fine figure here. Here is Lady Inchiquin and two of Lord Essex's sisters, but I am not acquainted with them. Duchess of Queensberry comes tonight. My head aches so much that I hope you will excuse this my scrawl, and I must end.

Your affect. sister
and humble servt,

S. OSBORN

Gray the poet lodges in our house; so he has supped with us.

LETTER III

Mrs. Osborn is evidently referring in this letter to inoculation, which was introduced into England in 1718 and was violently opposed by great numbers of people. The three princesses mentioned are the granddaughters of George I. "Jack" is her brother, afterwards Admiral Byng.

CONDUIT STREET, June 2, 1722

I was much obliged to dear Brother Robin for your patience in writing down prescriptions for my son, as well as to Dr. Askenhurst for his advice, but he has been too ill for me to venture anything but just what they have ordered him. Sir Hans Sloane and Amions have had him under their care. His swelling under his arm is still open—that is, the wound that was made there by it being lanced; it is



now held open by a pea. . . . I would ten thousand times sooner send them into a room to catch the smallpox than poison their blood in this manner, since there is no knowing when the accidents will end that comes by this pernicious practice.

Monday last was a great court at St. James's, and most people very fine, but I believe the gentlemen will wear petticoats very soon, for many of their coats were like our mantuas. Lord Essex had a silver tissue coat, and pink color lutestring waistcoat, and several had pink color and pale blue paduasoy coats, which looked prodigiously effeminate. The three young Princesses danced, which is a sign they got over their inoculating very well, for I am sure my son could as soon fly as dance. Brother George lives altogether in the camp; I hardly ever see him. Brother Byng is better since he was at Southill, and all are well there but my father. Jack, I think, knows when he is well off, for he has taken up his rest at Danbury.

I doubt not but you had some merry doings at Bristol last Monday, and hope you had a share in the diversion. I can send you no news from this place but what is in the public prints, for I have no men belong to me, so of course can have no news that is authentic.

I believe the country will soon be pleasant, but hitherto I fancy you have had much rain, for certainly it has been so here, and I remember last year at Bristol it was the same. It spoils my walks sometimes, for most mornings, instead of ordering my coach and six, I order my shoes and ten toes to trot away to Chelsea. Your aunts and all here are much your servants, but none more so than

your affec. sister

and humble servt,

S. OSBORN

LETTER IV

August 4, 1722

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



Dear Brother Robin will think I am continually troubling you with letters, but having writ to Mr. Theed before and had no answer, I am willing he should have this carried to him, so should be obliged to you to send one of your porters with it. If he is not at his chambers, they may leave it with his clerk, and I should be infinitely obliged to you, if you have any time when you go to the other end of the town, if you would call on him yourself and help solicit for me. The case is this—that I have had answers to my Chancery bills, but they proving roguish ones, and not to the purpose, I am obliged to file a bill of exceptions to them, and oblige them to answer more fully. Mr. Theed was to have drawn up this bill before I left town, but it is not yet done, and it should be very soon filed, or else I shall not give them time to answer it in Michaelmas term, and I am quite weary of so many delays. . . . When they see a man appear for one they will not delay so, but a poor woman is made nothing of—she may live upon air seven year if she can.

I hope you had my letter of joy to you, but I suppose you have so much business now that I must not expect to hear from you.

Brother Byng talks of going to town next Tuesday or Wednesday to see the Duke of Marlborough's funeral, which they say will be extreme fine.

All here much your humble serv^{ts}, but none more than
your affect. sister

and humble serv^t,

S. OSBORN

LETTER V

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

✱

[*The (Christopher) Laver alluded to in this letter was a barrister who assisted Jacobite plots in the hope of becoming chancellor under a restoration; he was accused of conspiracy, found guilty, and hanged in 1723.*]

DANBURY, NOV. 30, 1722

I was in hopes before this to have heard from dear Brother Robin, but will suppose you have been much taken up with more weighty affairs at your office, and also hearing Mr. Laver's trial, and such things of consequence, but should have took it for a favor to have been in your thoughts Wednesday. All here remembered your health, and joined with me wishing your years may continue to prosper with as much success as they had hitherto done. I wanted much to see you after I had talked to the lawyers, before I came out of town, but not being able to get them together till the night before, it was impossible to see you. . . . I must beg you will be so good to take my affairs under your management. It is a great deal of trouble, and I know not how to ask it, but if you are so obliging to do it, it will be esteemed a very great friendship and obligation in you.

Harris is slow and dilatory in his way, and Theed is so in his. They both blame each other, and I could never judge between them but by carrying Harris sometimes to Theed with me and hear them talk it over before me. The way to make yourself master of the affair is, I believe, necessary you should read over my bills and answers in Chancery, which Harris holds and will give you to read. The answers I had last summer from Messrs. Leigh were



not thought sufficient, and therefore I filed exceptions to them, which it seems now they design to argue before a Master in Chancery. I should be obliged to you to go to Theed and know when they are to be argued, and if it would not be too much trouble, I should be glad you would be in court when they are argued. . . . The rent is all paid into Chancery, but we might get an order to permit it to be put out on India Bonds, etc., that I might have interest, and not let it lie dead—for there is above £600 paid in there which lies dead without interest. There has lately been a subpoena served upon Sir Danvers and another for myself to foreclose the equity of redemption of the mortgage. . . . You must have a full account of their proceedings, and not [let them] shuffle you off as they do me, by saying they will take care and do all that is proper. They are all rogues, but I cannot but say Theed has dealt as honestly by me as any one of them, and shuffled less; but he is very faulty in delaying getting the particulars drawn of Newgate Market estate, which you must press him for; for until they are drawn no one can see the value of it in order to buy it, and it is a great detriment to Sir Danvers not to have that estate sold because he is obliged to pay interest for money which should be paid off by the sale of that estate. . . . To follow this will tire you to death. . . . I shall be satisfied in general to know you undertake to be my solicitor. . . . I hope it may lie one day or other in my son's power to be able to serve you or yours and acknowledge the favor you do his mother, for our good Book says there is great merit in assisting the fatherless and widow, and to see them that are in need and necessity have right, and I am sure I must claim your friendship under all these titles.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

I will trouble you with no more now, but conclude with
the addition of subscribing myself

your most affect. sister
and humble servt,
S. OSBORN



LETTER VI

DANBURY PLACE, Dec. 19, 1722

I am much obliged to dear Brother Robin for the account I received from you by Sunday post of my affairs. I am perfectly easy and satisfied they will be well managed now you have undertook the trouble Next time I must desire you to ask Harris for all the papers concerning the poor at Chicksands, for I very much want them.

Last week I was at Purleigh and Screens; played at cards there till two in the morning. But London hours very ill suit the country.

We have read your new play, which I doubt not but you have seen more than once, but we cannot relish it here, and therefore conclude 'tis our want of taste, since the *beau monde* are of a different opinion. Mr. Bob Fitch comes home a Saturday. He has been very ill of a fever, and has not yet quite recovered it.

Your affect. sister and
obliged humble servt,

My love to Neddy.

S. OSBORN

LETTER VII

DANBURY, December 28th, 1722

I received dear Brother Robin's by Sunday post, as also one from Harris. . . . He says I must come to town to be



admitted in court as my son's guardian, to answer the bill that is preferred against him. If it must be so, I hope it will be so contrived that I may stay but one day in town, for I have not half a crown of my own in the world, and therefore can bear no expense but that which is unavoidable. You are very good to call on my tedious people. Once being spoken to by a man has the weight of ten times a woman's speaking. Mr. Theed must be hurried out of his life to get Newgate Market sold. That would greatly add to the peace of all, for 'tis a torment to have that so long about.

I am yr aff^{te} sister
and humble servant,
S. OSBORN

A happy Xmas and many happy New Years to you.

LETTER VIII

Monday, March 11, 1723

Dear Brother Robin is very obliging to assist me in so often seeing my lawyers, which doubtless hastens them, notwithstanding it seems to move slowly on. Nobody that has not experience of the delays of that profession can imagine the plague of them. I know there is people think it more my fault that this affair is not sooner concluded, but I have bought my experience dear. I know 'tis their ignorance makes them say so, therefore I mind them not. . . . I beg the favor you will settle about the security. If the Chancery would allow it, and the other side agree, I should think India Bonds or Navy Bills, for the Land and Malt Tax carry but three per cent . . . and the interest will hardly answer the charge of putting the money out.



I am very easy Brace should administer. I have no will nor anything of Mr. Osborn's, and have signed a renunciation to Brace.

When the particulars of Newgate Market is done, then there is to be two city surveyors to value the houses, and since you are so good to take the trouble upon you, I hope you will go through with it all, and press this affair to be wholly completed. . . . And then I hope among some of your rich citizens that there will be a purchaser soon found, for the estates being sold will go a great way in settling our affairs, at least in what relates to Sir Danvers. He is so young that I hope I shall get all his affairs perfect before he comes of age, that he may enjoy it all without the torment I have known with it. Ask Mr. Theed when he thinks we shall be able to get any witness to set aside the mortgage, [and] whether he remembers Sparrowhawk, the attorney in the country, that promised to let him into many of Weedon's villainies in this affair. . . . I would have for my counsel, Mr. Talbot, Sir Philip Yorke, and Sergeant Chesshyre, so pray take care that these are not retained on the other side.

I am uneasy to find my letter so long and only filled with my own troublesome affairs, and nothing to entertain you. I find the town and Parliament is in full employment, and hope all things will be brought to light, and those suffer that ought to do so. The country begins to be very pleasant, and this place is always so—good company, a pleasant park, and delightful prospects, and everything that contributes to make a country life agreeable.

I will trouble you with no more now but that I am
y^r affect. sister and

obliged humble servant,

S. OSBORN

LETTER IX

DANBURY PLACE, Sept. 27, 1723

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



DEAR BROTHER,—Whenever I set pen to paper it is always to give you trouble, and increase the obligations I have to you. Aunt Lucy being out of town obliges me now to do it by begging the favor of you to pay some bills. I have enclosed them to my father for you, hearing there must not be any double letters directed to you. I have also writ to my father to pay you £45.

I can entertain you with nothing from hence, not being at the assembly yesterday; but there was much company. Mrs. Fitch hopes you will come down to the last, which is Thursday sennight. I am glad to hear Brother Byng is going to divert himself at Bath while the hurry of removing is over in Albemarle Street. I am in great hopes of bringing my cause to a hearing this term, and Mr. Bramston, who is my clerk in Chancery, thinks there is great reason to believe the mortgage will not be proved to be a good one. My money is at last put out on bank annuities, so by degrees I get but slowly forward. I may hope a little time more will make me easy. All here are much your servants, but none with more truth than

y^r affect. sis^{tr} and

obliged humble serv^t,

S. OSBORN

I heartily rejoice to hear Jacky is a lieut. I hope it does not want confirmation. Let me know if it is certainly so, or only supposition.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



1726

LETTER X

SOUTHILL, May 17, 1726

I must trouble dear Brother Robin with thanks for your last letter, and [am] glad the Yorkshire money is in your hands; for by a letter from Mr. Theed, I hear the Dean of York is come to town, and the life is now to be renewed immediately, and I am to pay £623 for the new one he grants me. In the first place, we have a difficulty who he is to grant it to; Sir Danvers being a minor, it cannot be to him. I may marry again, and therefore 'tis not thought proper to grant it to me, and therefore Mr. Theed has desired me to consider of two people I can trust to have it granted to them. I have chose yourself and Tommy Osborn, and hope you will give me leave to do so, because it is not safe to have it granted to any but those that are just and honest, so hope you will have no objection. . . . [It will not] give you any trouble more than to make use of your name, and upon any occasion of surrendering it up to have another life renewed, it must be done by you.

The next difficulty I am under is to raise the sum of £623, for by my paper inclosed you have but £441 in your hands. I did not imagine this money would be wanted until I had received Newgate Market rents, so that what to do for the £181 I know not. I have writ to Aunt Lucy to try to borrow it upon a pressing occasion. All the favor I ask of you is to answer the whole sum when it is de-



manded of Theed. I will take care you shall be repaid in less than a week. . . . Do not let me lose my credit in not having the payment answered, for I have ordered Theed to draw upon you for £623 whenever the Dean is ready to sign. Pray let me have two words from you by next post. I am always in that unhappy state to be wanting favors, and never in a capacity to return them. I hope I shall soon overcome all my difficulty, that I may not be such a continual trouble to my friends. If you excuse this you will infinitely oblige

your most affect. sister and
obliged humble servt,
S. OSBORN

LETTER XI

Pattee Byng had married, in 1724, Lady Charlotte Montagu; hence the allusion to Kimbolton as this brother's home.

SOUTHILL, July 12, 1726

I have not had the pleasure a great while of a line from dear Brother Robin, and hope that by this time that part of the money is repaid to you, but I have spent a fortnight at Kimbolton, my brother's home, which hindered me writing or hearing of business. . . .

My brother Byng and myself spent our time very agreeably at Kimbolton, which is the finest house and park I have ever seen, though not contented with enjoying that alone, we went to see several other places—Boughton, which is the Duke of Montagu's, and Drayton, Lady Betty Germain's, both in Northamptonshire. The first was a prodigious building, and great designs were formed by the



late Duke, who only finished one front. The gardens and wood is certainly fine, but I think wants variety, being all an entire deep shade with fine lime trees and grass walks. We saw it to much disadvantage, the bridge being broke [so] that we could not see the water-works, which they say are fine; and indeed the gardens and house are both ill kept, the Duke not being there above a fortnight in two or three year, and all the furniture except fine family pictures is taken down for other houses.

Drayton is an old house that pleases me very well, built with towers; not regular within, but fine galleries, and a very agreeable place, if it were not so dull looking.

My brother and the Duke spent two days abroad without us; went with Sir William and Sir Gilbert Pickering to Whittlesey Mere, a-fishing in a yacht. The weather proved fine, and they came home well pleased with their expedition, which seldom happens when it is proposed. It is a lake in Huntingtongshire, twenty-two miles round, and the narrowest place over it is four mile broad, so that 'tis a perfect sea. There is cuts that run from it down to Lynn, and so into the sea.

Since we came home, which was last Wednesday, have been in a continual hurry. Thursday by invitation dined at the Duke of Kent's. Friday we were dressed and in the coach to go to Lord Fitzwilliam's, but rain prevented us. Saturday we was to wait on our new neighbor, Mrs. Beacher. She was a good fortune, though a brewer's daughter at Hackney, so you may imagine she is nothing extraordinary; but Mr. Beacher will have money to build a new house, and those are, they say, the chief ingredients towards a happy life.

Sunday we was again dressed, but the rain prevented our going to Ampthill. Yesterday we had the Duke and

Duchess of Kent and Mr. Cole with them, also the Herveys, and this day are for the third time to dress for Amptill; and now I have given you a short account of our time. I must only add the humble service of all here to you and assure you I am,

Dear Brother Robin,
most affect. sister and humble servt,
S. OSBORN

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



I should think it impossible for Uncle Byng to hold a month longer; it is not to be expressed what he endures. A most melancholy end, poor man, he makes, and every day one wishes might be his last. Saturday nobody expected he could have outlived; fell into great passions of tears, and took leave of his family with recommending the care of them to my father. Indeed she has a miserable time of it, and night and day is nursing him; nobody in the world can take more care of a man than she does of him, and one should have thought nothing but the most sincere affection could have supported any one to go through what she does, but hers sure must be compassion.

LETTER XII

SOUTHILL, Oct. 25, 1726

DEAR BROTHER,—The post I had the favor of a letter from you brought us the agreeable news of your good fortune in the lottery which (though a trifle), yet [I] fear it is not true since you did not confirm it by your letter. Mrs. Byng, who heard the number read, told us it was my brother George who had that good fortune. I wish George very well, but when I consider it is but one main



and 'tis gone, I rather hope 'tis your own, and hope soon to have the satisfaction of hearing from you that it is so.

To-day my brother Byng is going to Bedford, when there is to be a very great meeting of all the gentlemen in this county, the secret history of which is that last week there came the servant of the Bell Inn at Bedford, who went round to all the gentlemen—dukes and lords without distinction—with the Duke of Bedford's service, and to desire their company to meet him at The Bell at Bedford tomorrow. This message coming by such a messenger, startled everyone, and last week Sir Rowland Alston, Mr. Brown, &c., came to consult my father what was to be done, and what was the meaning of this message, for beside it was also to a Tory inn, they heard by the by there was a design on foot for some propositions against the next elections. In short everyone was under difficulties; so my father, brother, and several more of the Whig gentlemen went last Thursday to the Duke of Kent's to consult on this grand affair. The oddness of the messenger will not permit the Duke of Kent nor my father to go, but they agreed by all means to have all the others go, and muster up all the Whigs together in the county. As it is the first meeting he has desired with the gentlemen, and sent without distinction of party, so it was judged they should not make any; and [since] it was necessary they should be prepared if he proposed anybody to set up, that then they should oppose any Tory and name another. Duke of Kent would have had my Brother Byng stand, but for several reasons it is declined. Beacher will not be at the expense. Therefore at last it was agreed that Ongley has hardly any principles—at least not violent, if he is a Tory—and that 'tis necessary to court him and bring him over, if they can, to the Whig interest.



My Brother Byng carries him and Brownsell and Hervey with him in his coach to Bedford, and then is to carry him to the Whig inn, where they will meet Alston, Orlebar, and all the Whigs, who are to propose it to him, to be beforehand with anything that can be started by the Duke of Bedford, who we hear intends to have Leigh and Monox, who are both good Tories. But what will be the end of all this I know not, but think 'tis a shame to begin already such treaties for people to spend such a large share of money and health as they must do in three year. 'Tis a sign Duke Bedford is a giddy, hot-headed creature, or he would not delight to study an expensive election to his neighbors. All this is at present under the rose, but tomorrow it will be known at Bedford, and I thought you would not dislike to know this affair, which is but the beginning of greater.

My house is done, and it will cost me £75 furnishing and all,—and £30 was the first sum, [which] with large allowances might come to £50! Now I [who] have spent pounds must save shillings, and I intend to stay here as long as the family does, though I believe Lady Charlotte has set Friday fortnight. . . .

I have been thinking if I could not have a little assistance from you. I remember once you did scrape up a little chest of candles for Jacky from the office. I say no more, for if it neither suits conscience nor convenience I do not ask it.

You will wonder how I contrive to fill such a large sheet of paper where I have only left room to assure you I am, dear Brother,

your most affect. sister and
obliged humble servant,
S. OSBORN

LETTER XIII

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

This letter is addressed to Mr. Byng at Compiègne.

SOUTHILL, Oct. 25, 1726



DEAR BROTHER,—It is very obliging in you to give me the pleasure of seeing your hand, and hearing you were well, which favor I received last post. Pleasure and business no doubt make great alteration in spending one's time, and makes one seem to breathe a different air at the same place. This reflection comes from thinking last year 'twas all the former, and perhaps this year all the latter, or rather a mixture of the two that makes both agreeable. Too much of one would perhaps do one harm, and too much of business clouds the understanding. I have had more of it than many women of my age. I own I now and then wish myself in your pocket, wishing to know a little truth. We are so humdrum here that we know nothing but from newspapers. I don't love to live quite so free from the hurry of the world, without any gentlemen with us; all have deserted us this summer. My father has not had time to be here yet, though [he] hopes to slip down next week. My brother is well pleased at Scarborough. George has taken pet, and says he won't see us again this summer, and at present [we] don't know where he is; . . . next week I hear he is to be for 20 days upon guard at Windsor. No news of Jack yet, and for Ned, he is diverting himself at Danbury till the race time in Kent. Thus you see how forlorn we are. For my own part [I] know nothing more than conversing with farmers, improving my knowledge in turnips and wheat land, . . . and riding out most evenings. My mother has an extreme pretty pad upon which

she and Mrs. Vincent take turns, for we cannot very well be equipped with more than two.

The Kents went to the Installation, and have not been down since; they being our best neighbors, we miss them much.

After this account, what can you expect from this place? —especially when I consider I am writing to Paris, and to one who knows more than we do here, and therefore must not venture at any sort of news. And for ill-nature, love, and envy, they are subjects the town will be ever full of, though ever so empty of people; but as I never give in to such idle nonsense, nor believe it would entertain you, I shall only tell you I fancy all is made easy again between Tom and his lady, and they will not part as people was so malicious to say. 'Tis very hard every little indiscretion in families must give so much entertainment to other people.

Lucy has got a knack of writing fine descriptions since she is become a traveller, which makes me doubt of all that was related last year from Paris, since I find she can give as fine an account of the north, and therefore I shall imagine all that is new and charming to her.

I know not how to direct to you, therefore have took the liberty to enclose it to Mr. Walpole. Pray make my compliments of excuse to him for doing so, and believe me, dear Brother,

your most affectionate sister,
and very humble servant,
S. OSBORN

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN





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LETTER XIV

SOUTHILL, Aug. 21, 1729

I take this opportunity to welcome you again into England, and am extremely glad you have had a pleasant tour, as the ladies say it has been. They are in great delight with it, and have great obligations to you for your care of them. I hope we shall soon see you down here. Pray don't neglect us, though it is not so fine [as] at Versailles; we are now reduced to a small family, and hope you will not find any excuse to forget your promise of spending a little time with us. . . . Service to George. . . .

your affect. sister,

S. OSBORN

LETTER XV

This letter is written just after the marriage of Mr. Edward Byng with Miss Bramston.

SOUTHILL, Nov. 28, 1730

I am indebted many thanks to dear Brother Robin for the obliging letters since I came here. Your joy and kind expression to Brother Ned and me on this occasion have been vastly pleasing to me and to my Sister Byng, who expresses great esteem for you—she told me you had pleaded hard for your brother. . . . Though the newspapers have near doubled my Sister Byng's fortune in point of wealth, yet what is wanting to make that up is fourfold made up in her own value, for she seems of a sweet disposition and formed to make a man happy; indeed I have no doubt but

they will make each other so, for I think he has many virtues and is very good-natured.

How long we stay here is uncertain. They are endeavoring to find a house fit to buy for them in town, which would be best if it can be found at first, because of furniture fitting to it, and rent runs away with what would purchase one. Their fortunes will be but moderate, for though she has £1,000 a year, yet there is £10,000 debt which must be paid. I imagine she will soon sell her estate in Essex to pay off that debt, and all she brings beside she must spend; indeed, her house will be his, her coach his, &c., but otherways he cannot spend more than he did before, if so much. . . . It is agreed what remains after the debts are paid is to be settled on herself and children, and in failure of them to him for ever. But except that happens, he never will have power to touch one penny more than the income; therefore this was no great catch without the agreeable temper she has brought with it, which, as George wrote Ned word, is a jewel whose luster will brighten by wearing.

I doubt your Aunt Molly, as you call her, looked very sour at the news, as to be sure all the Bramstons must do. Her uncle is intolerably vexed, but answered my father's letter with civility, though [he] has wrote a very unpleasant one to her.

I will not run on with more, but to tell you we all drank your health yesterday, being the 27th, and if the winds would have blowed our thoughts to you, it would have been to assure you of our good wishes; and none more of them at heart than, dear Robert,

your very affect. sister
and faithful humble servt,

S. OSBORN

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN





So many letters every post to bring joys to us that our whole time has been spent in reading and answering of them. This is near the thirtieth or more I have made this week.

LETTER XVI

CHILBOLTON, Oct. 21, 1731

Dear Brother Robin is very good to give me the pleasure of a letter, which I return my thanks for, and wish I could say anything from this place which might make this worth your trouble to read. I must welcome you to your winter quarters, where I find you are all gathered together; therefore pray disperse my compliments among them and double them to yourself.

Where is George? I hear nothing of him, nor where he is. If he is in good spirits, I am easy.

You that are in the midst of the *beau monde* and think of nothing but foreign dukes, &c., will not be entertained with what I can relate from hence, which only consists of the pleasures of the field, when last Monday we were particularly well pleased, for by invitation we had Dr. Burton, the Master of Winchester School, and his ten young noblemen's sons that live with him (for which he has £200 a year for each, and is as a private governor to them, and they also have the advantage of a public school at the same time, which surely must be a fine way of educating them). These with four other young gentlemen of the school met us in the field a-hunting; they and their attendants and ours made in all forty people, and after very good sport all came home to dine here. Indeed, I have not seen a finer sight than these boys and their master together.



Lord Deerhurst and his two brother Coventrys, Lord Ossulston, Lord Brooke, Master Duncomb, and Sir Robert Burdett, Master Greville, Master Wallop (Lord Lymington's son), Master Tryon, also Lord Drumlanrig, the Duke of Queensberry's son, who is under his peculiar care though not in the house, because he would not exceed his fixed number. Last week we spent three or four days at Lord Lymington's, which is a fine place, and they very agreeable people. My Lord was so good to engage some of my perplexed affairs, which are in so unhappy a situation that no way can be contrived to settle them well, but I hope another fortnight will release me from thinking more of them for this year. I beg the favor you will give the enclosed to Aunt Lucy, and that you will believe me with great truth, dear Brother,

your very affect^e sister
and humble servant,
S. OSBORN

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LETTER XVII

There is a gap of nearly two years between this letter and the foregoing one. During the year 1732, Sarah made a tour of three months in France and Belgium with her friend, Lady Gage. [Her journal of travels was preserved with her other papers.]

LONDON, 26 July, 1733

Dear Brother Robert is very obliging to let me partake of your diversions and *douleurs* in Kent. I feel your situ-



ation, but I think there is not the less life in it for the dull prospect at present. Time and patience cures all evils. I have been puzzling over business today I wanted to do before I leave the town, but find myself less capable of anything of that sort than in the midst of a fever. It was the steward's account necessary to be passed, but I am forced to lay them by: find it impossible to proceed. What creatures we are to have a little illness alter the whole frame! I shall be quite melancholy to find myself so useless if I do not mend very much in the country.

I go to Lord Shannon's a Monday, I believe for the month of August, but that depends on company they expect there; [they] would not let me stay longer in town, for which they are very kind, for I rather lose than get strength here, and yet grow fat. My acquaintance in town have been very good to me; I have not been one day alone, so that I really cannot say I dislike being here. I went with Lady Gage to Ashly this week, and returned in a chaise. I thought I might venture calling half way at Duchess of Cleveland's, where we refreshed; otherwise have not been out of my doors since mother went out of town. There is no sort of chat or news—you are in the gay life, and I hope Kent will answer all your expectations, which will be a very great pleasure, dear Brother,

to your affect. sister

and humble servt,

S. OSBORN

Bro. George, tired of Southill, is going to Hampton Court tomorrow; not in waiting, so to his lodging there. He intends for Southill again in three weeks.

LETTER XVIII

April 1734

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



All the advice Danvers met with when he was in London was not for his advantage, and fearing he should not be a man soon enough, those ways never fail to have their effect, and whenever he returns, is some time before he can settle again. I have heard from Mr. Charles that he has kept very ill hours ever since he went down, and consequently cannot study next day, but makes him very indolent. Two o'clock in the morning is very improper hours, and therefore I should be much obliged to you to give him half an hour of your time to write a little good advice to him. You may tell him that you met with a person who came from Cambridge of whom you enquired, and that they told you of his bad hours, and therefore that the ill consequences that must produce has made you write to him on that subject, and that you imagine I know nothing of it, and say something to encourage him to take Mr. Charles's advice, for if he does not find the men of the family have an opinion of him, he will have less and less regard for him (Mr. Charles) every day, which will be very unhappy. I will not keep the news longer, and this hint is enough, and I shall be much obliged if you will be so good to write this post if you have time. They think women and parsons don't know the world, and that it is manly to keep such hours.

I can only add that I am,

yr very affect. sister and humble servt,

S. OSBORN

LETTER XIX

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



This letter is written to Mr. Robert Byng just after his marriage with Miss Forward. [The Princess of Orange herein referred to was the eldest daughter of George II.]

CONDUIT STREET, 27 April 1734

DEAR BROTHER,—After hoping you had a pleasant journey to Plymouth, and that all things there appear to your satisfaction, I give myself the pleasure of conveying my good wishes to you, and imagining you will be glad to hear how things go here. I send you the account of our county election, which came on last Wednesday. Votes for Spencer were 1,351, Alston 1,287, Leigh, 1,020, by which you will see Spencer had even a greater majority than my brother when he stood, and that was reckoned a very great one. . . . The populace of Bedford are most discontented at having no opposition for the town, and by this time it is determined if Sir Roger Burgoyne and Mr. Beacher opposed them; the election was to be yesterday, and there was schemes to make that matter bear, though possibly without much hopes of succeeding, the return being doubtful. I am impatient to hear how it has gone. If they succeed, I shall think it a masterpiece. . . . Now I must tell you the long-expected match of Lady Fanny Pierrepont and Phil Meadows was concluded last Tuesday from the Opera. She pretended to be ill and went out; neither servants nor chair of her own could be found at that time, and so in a hack chair she went directly to Lady Meadows in Priory Garden, where was parson, license, husband, and all ready. Next day he and she went out of town to his sister Bulstrode's at Hounslow. She was of age the day



before, and has given herself and £20,000 entirely to him. I hope she will be as honorably dealt with in relation to the settlement of her fortune as some people you have been concerned for.

There is not any news yet come of the arrival of the Prince and Princess of Orange in Holland. The wind is against letting us know soon. There is no doubt they got there safe, and glad he is, I am sure, to set his foot on his own land again. They talk of the Prince of Orange going to the Rhine, a volunteer only; if that is so he has promised the King and Queen that the Princess Royal shall make them a visit. It is to be in two months, and has been a sugar-plum that has had the desired effect, for everyone concerned in their voyage has had faith to believe it, though I believe none else can; at least it is very improbable. It made them all go cheerful, when from thinking not to see England in years, that they expected now to return in two months. The King said he would send his yachts upon the first notice for her, and take care she should be back again to meet him at his return from the Rhine. There is orders given to buy horses for her to hunt when the season comes: they are then to be at Hampton Court. So all this looks serious, and the Queen talks of it with great pleasure.

The town is a desert: looks like July. How is it possible to think it April? It has not been so in this month in anyone's memory.

I am with great truth, dear Brother Robert,
your very affect sister
and humble servant,
S. OSBORN



1 7 3 8 — 1 7 4 1

LETTER XX

[In the four years which elapse between this and the preceding letter, Sir Danvers attained his majority (1736).]

SAVILLE STREET, 1738

MY DEAR DANVERS,—I have wrote so many epistles to you this week, that now I think there is nothing left to say on your own affairs, and therefore I have set down to consider what you desired me to do some time ago. 'Tis a subject quite disagreeable, since I cannot endure to think of your being at any expense with me; only when I think again, it is if I do not come to some calculation you will never esteem my house your own, and I cannot be easy if that is not so, for I must desire you to look upon it entirely in that light, and to come and go and do in it exactly the same as if I was out of it, and be without the least constraint or formality in any one particular. You must believe this sincere when you reflect that all the satisfaction I can enjoy centers in yourself, and consequently can never be so happy as when it is in my power to contribute towards your ease—but to the point.

The first thing I lay down is that for two or three year to come you will enjoy a single life by being here and there and everywhere; therefore I would put this affair in a method that you should never be at expense here but when you are actually here, and so always carry your expense with you.



The whole of the affair is this, that when I live by myself I generally spend in what I call housekeeping—which is only eatables—thirty shillings a week. If company or any unforeseen thing happens it increases according to that, but never is under, so that I reckon myself and five servants at that rate, exclusive of beer, coals, candles, tea, coffee, sugar, wine, and several other articles which slip into housekeeping.

When I live alone I only have a slice of the servants' joint without any addition whatever, but that cannot be if any one person is with me, and whenever you have been at home it has seldom been under £4 a week; therefore I reckon one week with another it will generally come thereabouts, for I reckon you will have two servants here; but have more or less, you will only be at the expense you bring with you.

Now consider in what light you would choose to put it. I am uneasy for fear I may not do it in that which you approve, and that you will by complaisance assent. I beg it may be not so. Be free and sincere in your answer, as I am in my proposal, which is, that the fewer articles and trouble you have the better. And I was thinking the expense of coals, candles, beer, washing, &c., would be endless to divide; therefore suppose all these articles sunk, and instead of them you make the table when you are in town, your own. I fear you will think upon first sight of this, that I am unreasonable, in proposing you should keep me and my five servants when you are here, but upon second thoughts . . . you will conclude I do it in this method that you may never have any reckonings but the weekly account, and that only when you are here for any time, and hope you will give me leave to treat you with my own short commons, when only a few days call you to town; then



when the table is your own, you may live better or worse as you like, invite what company you please, and nothing can make you more master of this house than the table being your own, with a housekeeper who will take all the care possible to have it frugal to your mind. If you rather choose I should put in the thirty shillings a week in the house purse, it will be equal to me, and I will then endeavor to divide the other articles. Why I add washing to them is that when you are at home I always wash table linen and sheets abroad. I hope I have explained it so that you understand. I pay for everything but the direct house-keeping weekly book, which will come to £4 a week, which is, however, cheaper than you could be at any scrub lodging, and the servants at board wages, and from this time I desire it may no more be called my house but your own.

As soon as the great Shefford wagon drove from this door a Wednesday, there came the great Winchester wagon with a hogshead of two-year-old port wine between me and my mother. If it should answer—and they generally have good wine at Southampton—I will have a larger stock, for port is all I pretend to, and therefore would if possible have it in perfection. By all means write again to the Duke of Beaufort, and take the liberty to remind him that the year's interest was due the 19th of last month, that you have engaged to pay £300 the 24th of this month, and depend upon his being so good [as] to order the payment of [it] against that day, and should be obliged for answer at Lord Torrington's, Southill, Biggleswade, Beds. I hope Brother George got down well this terrible day. I pity poor Jack and more the *Chester* in the downs. The wind is quite frightful.

My duty and compliments to all.

Your truly affect. Mother,

S. O.

They say Sir Orlando is taken by Mr. Edwards, one of his creditors, and bringing up to the Fleet prison. 'Twas madness he did not go abroad after he was discovered. There is a severe criticism on Pope's "Essay on Man."

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER XXI

[*This letter was in the earlier edition dated 1733 and inserted as No. XVIII. From its text and allusions it is clear that the letter belongs in this group for 1738, concerned with household affairs and the Governorship of Barbados.*]

Dec^r 173[8]

MY DEAR DANVERS,—Mr. Ware will be with you by 12 o'clock on Thursday, and by farther enquiry of him I find he is in much esteem, and therefore hope he will prove a proper person to serve you As to my advertised friend, I cannot yet be able to come at his character, only that he was heir to the great sportsman Frampton, who left him £800 As you say, Mr. Frampton will have his choice of farms, for ten people where I was the other day was enquiring after him, and vexed he advertised, but one day I put them all in an uproar by telling them I had sent after him and seen him. They all begged if he did not succeed in you that I would let them know. . . . You would have laughed to have seen everyone's distresses unfolded. One cried "I have a farm has lain on my hands this two year of £180, and have not received a shilling;" another one of £140; another two farms, and so on till ten had declared to the same effect. This has convinced me that you have no worse luck than others. They were all so eager after this man that they could not agree who should



have the preference, and if he does not take your farm, I shall nevertheless be curious to know who is the lucky or unlucky person who gets him. Mr. Nicolson is a gentleman farmer that assists Mr. Fitch with his advice and lives in the neighborhood, and one to whom we have given a little present of wine for assisting us sometimes, and therefore a very proper person to give advice what you should do.

Brandy, lemons, knives, a copper pot, and jack goes tomorrow. Taylor says mugs, punch-bowls, and glasses are to be had at Shefford. There is no occasion to give two sorts of wine. I hope the basket I sent on Saturday got safe. Emerton's people were like all other, very teasing, and sent you down the wrong colors. To be sure you ought to have an account of all wheat, butter, pigeons, and everything—how sold, and what profits—and not he pay the rent and give you no farther account. I believe before this farm he was a very honest man, but this either by temptation or stupidity has very much altered his conduct. I am quite in a wood and very ignorant in his farming account; however, I shall endeavor to state it all in a regular way, and then you must consider the accounts before they are passed, and I believe you and I should be shut up some hours together before they can be so. I do assure you I am quite out of my depth, and must have your assistance.

I am told if your walls are not thorough dry your paper will be quite spoiled, and if they are dry the best way is to put the paper to the walls without any liming, if the walls are only one rough coat and not whited, but if they are whited, it will not do so. This is a good scheme to save expense, and I am assured 'tis by much the best way where there is wall.

I know not if Brother George jokes, therefore say



nothing that I may not be bit; but he yesterday assured me upon his honor that he had it from good hands that Brother Robert is appointed Governor of Barbados, which is £1,200 a year paid by the Government here and £3,000 by the Island. I wish it may be true, though sorry we must lose him. If this is really so we must think if he can provide some maintenance there for your Uncle Robert [Osborn], if he can be prevailed upon to go there. Possibly a new climate and a distance from his odious acquaintance may make him become a new man. He has sense if he would make use of it, and I am never without hopes where there is that ingredient, for at one time or other in life it predominates over the passions.

I hope you burn or lock up my letters, for I should be prodigious sorry anyone should know I pretend to offer my opinion to you. What is between ourselves goes for nothing, and you are so good as to take it as purely from affection, but a mother is the last person that other people will allow the privilege, and therefore whatever she says should die in your own breast.

LETTER XXII

December 26, 1738

DEAR BROTHER,—My head is so full of what Brother George told me yesterday, that I cannot help sending you my joy, for though there is many disagreeable things in it, yet the main must be considered. He declared to me upon his honor that he had it from very good authority and out of Sir Charles Wade's house that you were appointed Governor of Barbados. If this is so, why should you deny your friends the pleasure of hearing what must please them, if it does you? I don't let it go out of my lips to anyone,



but he told it at Stuckley's, and was so serious that we all bit[?] at it. Sister Byng assured me it was no jest; he told us all particulars, that you have it in a very handsome manner, without any clog upon you. Stuckley in a moment was thinking who to send with you, and I immediately was thinking how I could serve you here, and take care of your eldest son in your absence. It has so engrossed my thoughts that it spoilt my devotion yesterday.

Pray answer this letter next post, and with my compliments to you all, I am,

y^r very affect. sister
and humble servant,
S. O.

LETTER XXIII

This is the last letter addressed to Mr. Robert Byng. He died the following year.

CHICKSANDS, January 30, 1739

DEAR BROTHER,—Many thanks for a cargo of paper come a Thursday. Unreasonable consciences are still asking if it is not too late for your almanacs; I should be obliged to you for one, and a large ruler, with pencils, a little red ink, a little pounce, a piece of tape, for I am much employed at present in what I am distressed for these things, and can get nothing here, not so much as a penknife to scratch. . . . And if any of your clerks are at leisure, could you employ one to rule twenty sheets of the enclosed large paper? I am ashamed of all these troubles we give you. My son . . . is frightened at borrowing money and mortgaging, and therefore is most inclined to what is a certainty, though in the end not so profitable. You are very



obliging to think so much for him when you have so many material affairs of your own to take up your mind, which I hope will prove to your satisfaction and advantage. Be assured in anything Danvers or I can serve you in your absence, that you may depend upon our best care; therefore in all your schemes take it for granted we are ready to obey your orders, and shall do it with pleasure. Beside the natural affection and regard I must always have for you and yours, you have a strong claim to all our concern from the obligations we have received from you, and which we both gratefully acknowledge. My Brother Torrington came down Sunday, dined here yesterday, goes to London tomorrow. He says Henry Osborn goes to Guinea and Jack with you to Barbados, and may be worth his while from a good understanding between the Governor and his brother: if that is so, 'tis very well, otherways methinks you are all a-going from us—but I dare not reflect too much on the disagreeable part, therefore will stop on that subject. Can you spare two days when the coach comes for me? I desired Lucy to propose it, and do as it suits you. I would have gone up with Brother Torrington tomorrow, but Danvers desired I would stay a little longer. He finds a woman necessary in a house, which I hope will incline him in due time to think of a companion for himself.

Lady Anne Lumley I hear is to be married this week, and Lady Anne Montagu to succeed her as Lady of the Bedchamber. Lord Halifax is lucky to get rid of two daughters so soon. My compliments attend Sister Byng and yourself, dear Bro:

Y^r most affec.

sis. and faithful serv^t,

S. O.

Send us a little parliamentary news if any worth penning.

LETTER XXIV

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



The next twenty-four letters are all addressed to Sir Danvers Osborn. [The Duke of Manchester, an account of whose death and will occupies so much of this letter, was William Montagu, second Duke of Manchester, whose sister, Charlotte, had in 1724 married Pattee Byng, second Viscount Torrington, Mrs. Osborn's brother. The second Duke of Manchester had married Isabell, daughter of John, Duke of Montagu, and granddaughter (through her mother) of the celebrated Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, here referred to by Mrs. Osborn as the "old Duchess." The Duchess of Bedford mentioned in the postscript was the daughter of John, Earl Gower; in 1737 she had married John Russell, 4th Duke of Bedford, the nobleman to whom later on Sarah Osborn appealed in vain for help in saving her brother Admiral Byng (see pp. 83 ff.). The child christened was Francis, styled Marquis of Tavistock, born September 26, 1739. In 1767 Mrs. Osborn records his tragic death on the hunting-field (see pp. 124 ff.).]

SAVILLE STREET, October 27, 1739

MY DEAR DANVERS,—I much long to hear from you that your cold is gone, and as Lord Halifax comes to-day, and the ladies next week, I shall hope to hear you have Dr. Crane with you. My heart aches when I think how low-spirited you are there by yourself.

The wind I doubt changed too soon for Brother Robert; it is feared they are blowed into Plymouth. I had a letter from him dated Monday morning at 8 o'clock. They were then going through the Needles, and if the wind

lasted two days, hoped to lose sight of land, but I fear it changed Tuesday morning.

I have ruined you by buying the very handsome French bureau. Lord Essex I believe bid against us, and therefore brought it up to twenty guineas, and we bid t'other crown, and had it. It is now in my parlor, and I cannot grudge the money since it is an extreme handsome one, and you could have had no English bureau under £16 or £17; but if you do not care for it, I can part with it for what I gave. 'Tis tortoise-shell inlaid very fine with brass, and wants no sort of repair; it is the same sort of what stands in the two piers at Lord Carteret's. This is very fine and large of the sort

I hope you had oysters last week? Would you have them once a week or fortnight?

I send you "Common Sense" to show the spirit designed. One was sure the case would turn out so, where party rage must guide.

Lord Robert Montagu and Duchess Manchester came to town together last Wednesday. She went directly to Duchess Marlborough, who had prepared an apartment to receive her whenever it happened. I saw a lady yesterday, came piping hot from thence, left the old Duchess at cards, and exercising her wit on the poor Duke's will; commends the Duchess, who is in high favor at present, she has talked so sensible and proper on the occasion. She is charmed with her, but the will is her whole ridicule, and since it is so, 'tis pity he named his Duchess in it. He has left her £300 for mourning, which is not three pence, her watch and jewels for life, and after to his brother. This is set out by saying the watch cost I forget what, when she married in her youth. She has broke it and changed it away for one that cost but £14. The baubles of jewels are set in the same

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
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OSBORN





light, but the great joke of all is the sedan chair, which cost £30 at her wedding, and now not worth £4. The furniture of the two rooms which the Duchess of Marlborough had given her was not treated with so much contempt, but called a "few old goods."

This is the whole left the Duchess; he has left everything in Lord Robert's favor, being sole executor, not a farthing to his sisters, not even mourning, which is a little hard on them. £25,000 in money is ordered to be laid out in land in Huntingdonshire, and entailed on with the estate. Half a year's wages to all his servants, and nothing left to anybody beside. Duchess Marlborough says he has left his duchess and all his servants a half year's wages, for £300 was half a year's pin-money, so she puts it in that light. It is no wonder anywhere else but at Marlborough House that he should do all he could in favor of his brother, since there is so small estate to support so great a title, and £2,000 a year jointure to be paid out of it to a young woman may live this fifty year; but at Marlborough House all is called mean-spirited. I doubt nothing would have made it noble but leaving his Duchess the £25,000 cash. All else was trash, for she says she must starve on her jointure. Some say all the jewels she had was presents from her own family; if it was so, 'tis pity they were not entirely given to her, but this will was made at Kimbolton two years ago by a country lawyer, who I suppose made all returnable, even the sedan chair, through ignorance. However, I well remember how they treated the Duke of Bedford's character when his Duchess died, and therefore am not astonished to hear the same now.

The estate is reckoned £4,000 a year, and the place in the Customs £1,500, out of which Lord Robert had an annuity of £600. I don't reckon he will have above £3,000 a year addition with his title.

Undertakers don't go down to Bath till Tuesday; then they bring him to Slough, and so to Kimbolton, that it will be at least Sunday or Monday next before he is buried. . . .

I don't see that you might have been his succeder in Parliament, for Clark has not a foot of land in that county —'tis Dr. Alured Clark's brother. . . .

I have wrote enough to make your head ache to read.

Don't leave it upon your harpsichord.

I am your very affect.,

S. O.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



Princess Wales to see Duchess Bedford a Wednesday. Child christened Thursday. That day and yesterday saw company there. I met a thousand people I did not think had been in London.

LETTER XXV

From SAVILLE STREET, November 8, 1739

MY DEAR DANVERS,—My cold still keeps my spirits so low that I have not been out three times since you went, and therefore have not that joy you imagine by the town filling, which it does now every day.

I have amused myself with clearing away drawers full of old letters and papers, to save you the trouble of making a bonfire of them. I should have reserved them to have amused you, if I could imagine they would ever have been read by you, and only yourself. Many of them have made me vain, but more have extinguished that weakness by bringing melancholy past scenes into my remembrance. Some from my father with such tenderness and esteem for you that I must still preserve them for your perusal, and



though it may be fashion to explode such tenderness and humanity as I have lately been reading, yet I thank God for having been born in the days when such passions were praiseworthy, and having received the benefit of them from my friends, for it surprises me to collect together the heap of civilities and kindness I have received, and the great want I was in of them. I hope distresses will lessen as inhumanity prevails, and woe be to those who are, and are to be born. My latter days have been so much happier that I had forgot how I struggled in life in my youth, till this leisure time has refreshed my memory.

The Duke of Manchester was to lie at Baldock last night in his way to Kimbolton. He has been very obliging to the Duchess, given her the offer of the house in Grosvenor Square until she can fit herself, also the use of what plate she pleases; . . . has carried her £100 for fear she has no money. She is sensible of all his civility, and has behaved exceeding well . . . His own Duchess removes in his absence to Grosvenor Square, at least till the lease is out, there being little trouble to step into that house quite furnished, and even coals laid in for them. He has given his sisters mourning, but that or anything else will not content them; they are outrageous that their brother did not leave them it. Their affairs will be the conversation of the town till some other person makes a new subject.

I am, my dear Danvers,
your very affec.,
S. O.

I am sorry to hear Ashby is taking the mills at Langford, for you will lose a good tenant, . . . but you know your own affairs best. A letter from Jack to-day—still at Spithead waiting for ships he is to convoy to Haddock;

expects daily to go. He thinks they (Brother Robert) are got to the Madeiras by this time, and we may hear from them from there. I am old fashion, and cannot be easy till I do. . . .

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER XXVI

[Preparations are toward for the marriage of Sir Danvers Osborn with Lady Mary Montagu, fourth daughter of the first Earl of Halifax of the second creation. The wedding took place in September.]

CHICKSANDS, Aug. 26, 1740

My heart goes pit-a-pat for fear you will come before we are in order. If tables and glasses don't come till Thursday sennight, I hope at least you won't come before Saturday after, for as that Thursday will bring so many things, what shall I do with you to come the same day?—and Friday must not be a wedding day, for it is unlucky. Therefore I shall scheme all for Saturday sennight, for it is not possible you can come here sooner. I wish Pattee or anybody could look at any of the auctions or places they sell at in Jermyn Street, and find two old half-settees for a trifle, to cover with the red stuff damask to match the six chairs, for I don't think the velvet armchairs do so well there as by the bedside. I feel like Martha, careful and troubled about many things.

Next week the wood holes must be filled, the evenings grow cool. . . . I have set Lady Mary's dressing-table in foylight [firelight?] and find it must be very inconvenient to her not to have a large glass in the pier where one was



before, for she is too tall to dress her body by the glass upon the table. I wish you could meet with any old fashion pier glass to put there. . . .

I am in a hurry, only time to assure you I am,
y^r affect.,
S. O.

Austin don't in the least care for this job of work; first he don't understand it, and second he is getting things for the fair, and he says no men to be had to help him. . . . It will not, I daresay, be done this two months; your pew alone, he says, will be a fortnight doing. Leck must set up the glasses when they come, for nobody here can fasten them to the stucco[?], or put the whole lengths in their frames.

LETTER XXVII

CHICKSANDS, Sept. 7, 1740

I imagine I shall hear from you tonight, and now expect every letter to fix the day of your coming. Pray at least guess about the time, for things must be had or bespoke beforehand. I have sent to the fishman at Eaton. He was there last Tuesday, says he has no good fish yet, but will call again Tuesday, and then I must bespeak fish for Friday, or whenever I take it into my head you will come. Then Friday will bring all relations, as those from South-ill and Clifton, and the next Friday after, being a good moon, will bring the neighborhood; therefore I shall calculate for two Fridays, and after that you may rest. The chimney man is not yet come . . . It is better, but not yet cured; it will do with a coal fire, but won't bear a blazing



faggot. They are all of opinion that nothing will do but putting it down, . . . but the next chimney is stone, and if this was brick, you might not like it—and though there is stone enough to do it, the mason's work would come to £5 and the bricklayer's to £2. . . . This it must come to at last, and have a funnel to itself; it is now so crooked and small 'tis impossible to have a draught. Rogers knows it is the only remedy, which makes him so tiresome about it, . . . and I dare not venture to order it without you.

The room is finished, the glasses prodigious handsome. I shall kill Bailis if the tables do not come next Thursday. . . . Whatever marble you are to have is already in England; there is no fresh blocks coming from Italy. I am quite peevish with her dilatory proceedings.

If those tables and your presses were come, we should be complete, except a hearth and dogs for the drawing-room. Shovel and tongs came on Thursday. What did they send a poker for? Shovel and tongs for dining-room, ante-room, your library, and two rooms in the new passage cannot be done without there are dogs and hearths sufficient. I am persuaded you will be pleased with the furniture of that room, though it is but paper. . . . The tea-kettle is come, and I hope you think it vastly handsome, and I hope it will not exceed what I shall be able to compass, desiring you to accept it as my present to yourself. Brother Robert has remitted me more money, and desires I would let Waples have £500 if he wants it for a purchase. For God's sake tell Waples he must make no such purchase, for my brother does not consider what he has sent for; . . . he thinks I put guineas together that will produce: he reckons much too fast.

I have drawn out your supper; send me word if you approve, or alter it as you like. I have given Mrs. Porter

dinners and suppers for a week, for the first week must be all clatter and hurry, and the more so the better. I hope I shall keep well till after that time is over, but I have had a return of my old complaint, has put me much out of spirits. All the poor chicks are fat, and from this time will grow large and lean again, but they must fricassee or do something; no eggs roast [?] with partridge—what shall I do? Three of them and two quails is all we have yet in. The men, Norman and everybody, I believe, has made Harvest Home. Pryor says he has not had such fine wheat nor so much since he was in the farm. . . .

Dr. Osborn was here in a hurry about the Hoo; says if you don't have it, Mr. Edwards will, and that he won't take less than 1,800 guineas; his wife don't care he should part with it under. I told him I daresay you would not be his hindrance from getting a good price.

LETTER XXVIII

SAVILLE STREET, October 28, 1740

I am glad the chapel is done and succeeds to your mind. The pulpit furniture is done, and goes down tomorrow; it had been with you last week but by a mistake. I brought up the old pulpit cushion to be fitted to the size and covered, and when I took off the old rotten cover there was wrote upon the dimity, "Dorothy Osborn, the year 1605. B.D."

Therefore I preserved that end and cut the other, since it had been 135 year in your chapel, and I conclude the old green cloth has been so too. I shall be glad if you and Lady Mary like what is sent; it is done in the cheapest manner it could to be decent. There was down enough in



the cushion to make two cushions for the books upon the Communion Table. I think you will want a Common Prayer Book for that. I hope this crimson won't offend Doctor Osborn. He was a little outrageous at the color. I unfortunately called it red, and that is not so right for a chapel. Is he reconciled to the tapestry at the altar? He is not sure if that does not favor a popish one. There goes a box with your books tomorrow, and with the chapel furniture a box of flowers for Lady Mary and her mantelette, also her two boxes from Chavenix, and a toast fork for breakfast; but I beg she may not break her back with stooping to make toast herself.

Your punch ladle was broke, it seems, and came to be mended, and goes also tomorrow. I name these things that you may order them yourself, for they had got a way of opening everything that came, and 'twas ten to one if I knew of it. I hope they did not serve you so with the oysters. The only reason I wished to know if you had them was if they were good, or if more would be acceptable to you.

"Are These Things So?" is a very severe poem; 'tis said to be wrote by Dodington. I send you that also tomorrow. I have packed up one of the old frames which I gave sixpence for; it must be gilt over, and then will be as handsome as your own. I am getting in all your bills. You have not sent your seal to be new cut, or said if you had your watch.

My dear Danvers, I am,
most affectionately yours,
S. O.

I will if possible send 6 hassocks tomorrow; there are 2 dozen of the ordinary ones in the Long Gallery. . . .

LETTER XXIX

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



ARGYLE STREET, June 16, 1741

MY DEAR DANVERS,—You need make no excuse for opening my letter; you very well know I have no secrets from you, and as it came from Barbados, I concluded you read them all. However, as there is another ship come in today, I will stay for other letters, before you need write about that affair. The man of war which is to bring them was arrived at Barbados; therefore I conclude them now to be upon the sea, and that they will be home the latter end of July.

Nobody is yet in your house. It is locked up, and the keys here. John goes there morning and night, that nobody knows but what he is in the house. What maid are you to have when you come?—for the house must be dusted against you come. Mary may be your maid while you are in town, for in a week or ten days I shall go to Shannon's to stay till October.

The secret is concerning the election. They are not properly chose, and there must be a new election, but for God's sake don't let a word drop about it. You are apt to leave your letters in the library, and I dare not explain more, and even this burn immediately.

Lady Mary and you are very obliging to accept of my good intentions, which must always be sincere in serving you and her, for while she loves you I must love her, and really do. Pray give her my thanks for her kind letter, which I intended to answer this post, but have been prevented.

Lord Oxford died this evening at six. Lord Duplin gone to Ireland, and I think leaves his lady with his mother

in Yorkshire. A monstrous fortune she is, but with them great fortunes there generally is a *but*. The provoking boy has neither brought St. James nor Gazetteer. I have sent again, and he is gone out with all in the shop.

Yr. very affect.,

S. O.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

Prince and Princess are at Lord Carteret's to-night. . . .

LETTER XXX

ARGYLE STREET, Oct. 10, 1741

MY DEAR DANVERS,—I must welcome Lady Mary and yourself to old Chicksands, where I don't doubt but you find charms you did not meet with at finer places. The old proverb says home is home, be it ever so homely. Indeed I always find it so, and really my *bandbox*, for so I must call it, is very agreeable to me. Indeed, you have made it so by extra ornaments I should never have thought of. Upon the whole, though I am vexed to have you do it, yet I must thank you both, and own it is now a genteel, pretty house, and I have no wish but that it was on the other side Swallow Street, for I would not have it larger if I could.

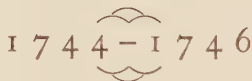
Pray take care of Lady Mary . . . and let me know when you come.

I have nothing to entertain you with here, but that it is said Lord Euston is to be married today. It has never come so near the time, but I have nevertheless heard it doubted, as indeed it will be till she is seen in her bridal apparel. Will you be so good as to tell Mrs. Porter that the cake and carpet came safe a Wednesday?—and I took the liberty of taking the table out of your kitchen: there are so



many tables at Chicksands you may bring one of those out of the gallery. . . . I must beg the favor you will give the enclosed letter to my Aunt Master yourself, for I would not have my mother see it; therefore pray be careful, and give it soon, because it wants an answer.

The poor Pilgrims are dismal objects still. Brother Robert Byng (the poor man that is gone) refused £1,000 that was offered him for the living he gave Corbet's parson for nothing. Those are offers that are made openly, their being esteemed first fruits. The bond he took was only a form, and which he told Corbet's parson he should never take of him. . . . What could be kinder in regard to Corbet, for he knew not the man but by his recommendation? . . . but everyone will rail and join in belief of ill things. Thank God, I abominate such easy faith, and never can believe ill of anyone till I am convinced they deserve it! Oh, ungrateful Corbet! for the sake of a dirty parson to spread such false reports! . . .



LETTER XXXI

[In the interval of three years between this and the preceding letter, Mrs. Osborn's grandsons, George and John, the children of Sir Danvers, were born. The birth of the second child was followed by the death of Lady Mary

Osborn, in 1743. Lady Anne Jekyll and Lady Betty Archer were her sisters.]

KENSINGTON, February 12, 1744

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



Both your boys charming well, George quite in spirits; was to see Lady Anne Jekyll and Lady Betty Archer yesterday; behaved well at both places.

For God sake come and see what is doing. The town is in a turmoil, never was the like; whether truth or not in the reports that are given about, I know not. The King sent a message to the Parliament yesterday that he had undoubted intelligence of the Pretender's son coming to invade these dominions. You can imagine how this announcement increases the consternation that is felt—men, women, not knowing what to believe, such an affright never was before. Upon receiving the King's message, the Duke of Marlborough got up and moved to address the King that they would all stand by him with lives and fortunes. Lord Chesterfield said he was not against that, but desired an enquiry first from whose ill-conduct we were brought to this distress. Lord Lonsdale said "the enemy was at our gates. We ought all to be unanimous and not start such things at such a time as this. If a man's house was afire, he must not stay to enquire who did it, but use all means to stop the progress of it," and spoke so strong none pretended to answer him—even made Chesterfield look confounded, and no divisions in that House; but in the Commons was otherways. Pitt made the same speech there as Chesterfield did in the other house, but so much more violent that he was three times called to order. The address was carried 140 majority against 123, but how lamentable to think we can have 123 traitors in our House. The Gov-



ernment is rather perplexed with intelligence than satisfied, for every hour some or other comes. 'Tis certain there are two fleets, one at Torbay, the other that was seen here. Norris sailed a Tuesday to St. Helens; orders went after him there, and now nobody knows where he is sailed. 'Tis said he is gone after that fleet off Dunkirk, and that he has been in sight of ten sail, and fired a gun, but the truth is not known. This came from some pilot.

If Torbay fleet is the decoy (for one certainly is) then they would pour in all men and arms from Dunkirk, so that our coast would then be open to them. Letters have been intercepted that they are to try to land in Norfolk, Sussex, Essex, or Kent. The alarm now grows stronger than it did at first. There are orders to all officers to repair to rendezvous at a moment's warning. St. James Square, Grosvenor Square, Lincolns Inn Fields, &c., are appointed. General Wentworth went from House of Commons last night to Harwich to meet the 6,000 Dutch troops we expect every day. 'Tis also said a ship yesterday brought intelligence that several sail of French passed the Straits of Gibraltar to join the Toulon[?] squadron. If this is true, they are in pain, for 'tis now said there is but a 20-gun frigate at Dunkirk and some transports. It is amazing the different reports that every hour spring up, and though it appears like men in buckram, for here, there, and everywhere they see many sail, yet it is quite a serious thing, and every creature in the utmost consternation. I desired Brother Robert Osborn to write to you this night if they had any certain intelligence. They live at the office; there are Boards held there sometimes at four in the morning. I can tell you no more, but there is a deal to hear.

I am,
your very affec.

S. O.

LETTER XXXII

The Mrs. Williamson in this letter was a connection of the Osborns, and her husband was Deputy-Governor of the Tower.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



KENSINGTON, May 29, 1744

Your boys are both well

Brother Jack, instead of being gone again, came to town a Saturday; desires me to make his compliments to you: sorry he just missed of you. Never saw him look better; says the *Salisbury* has taken good prize, will be two or three thousand pounds—some say five—but it will damp his joy to find Dudley[?] at home. Sure the boy will fly before he comes. I am almost sure I met him on horseback on Kensington Causeway last Sunday, powdered and spruce. I have seen Mrs. Williamson; she says every word the Red Ribbon told you is false, and only to shuffle you off from himself. Poor Dudley still shows he only went to a farthing school. For God's sake let all boys have a proper school till twelve years old at least. 'Tis terrible to think when they are captains that it will be a shame for them to write to the Admiralty. Poor boys, 'tis sad when no one belonging to them think learning is necessary. I even am come to think if they are to be cobblers they should first go to Westminster. The officers that last week went abroad have had a great escape from being cut to pieces by an ambuscade of 4,000 French, which was prevented by a hussar finding it out, and swam across the river to discover it. I think they are all safe arrived at the army. 'Tis said[?] the Dutch troops are to return. Letters yesterday



that Sister George [Byng] mends, though slow, but still in a very weak way.

I am,
y^r truly affect.,
S. O.

LETTER XXXIII

[*The "poor Legge" here referred to was evidently Edward Legge (1710-1747), commodore, fifth son of William Legge, first Earl of Dartmouth. Edward Legge is remembered for his disastrous voyage following Anson around the world (1740-1742). He was on the Severn, which became separated from Anson in 1741 off Cape Horn, and was obliged to return to England.*]

KENSINGTON, June 20, 1744

Both boys well, but at present Jack the best, for though George is well, yet he has the print of four fangs in his gums that make him fretful and yellow, and sleep unquiet. I wish you had come a week sooner, for he looked charming. I cannot say he does so now, though he was yesterday at Lady Anne's. She sent for him. Lady Halifax, Lady Bab and the Burgoynes were there, and they all thought he looked well; [he] exercised, and played with his gun. They were all diverted much, and he behaved very well. The King certainly goes, though not yet publicly declared, but all things in the family are preparing for it. There is much uneasiness, for we shall be left without King, army, or fleet, and the *Brest*[?] in the Channel. Ypres is taken, and 'tis thought Ostend, Nieuport, and Furness will be so by next mail.

You will lose the cream of Lord Anson's history, but if you are happy with your haymakers, 'tis as well. He comes



here to-day to kiss hands for his flag. Poor Jack came to town last Tuesday, with his leg on a cushion, and himself bolstered up with pillows in the coach. I went to him yesterday morning, surprised to see him hopping about the room. He said he was so at himself, but that the journey had been of great service, and was so well he would go to Winchester, Anson, &c. I find he was so ill at Portsmouth that no one expected his life; his going to fetch Anson ashore had like quite to demolish him: obliged to go to bed that moment, without being able to sup with him, or hear one of his stories. Poor Legge was there, but brim full; for a considerable time held out well, at last the tears ran down. Everyone pitied him, and did not wonder he should be so moved, for it was impossible to blot out the remembrance of his own fate. Anson looks well, but much thinner; Keppel, as brown as a mahogany table.

The Fitzwilliam match is today. Murrays to be at it; therefore Jack's cause cannot be heard, which was fixed for to-day. Fitzwilliam coach is a curiosity; I think they say it is all japan.

I dine much at Court: wine in ice, creams, &c., pheasant with eggs, and pheasant poults, which is shameful. Don't think but that I can dine on mutton when they are gone. Tomorrow I dine with Manchester. Their table is elegant; the ladies', I must say, is the reverse, though one may get a dab of ice there too. Hanover, Montagu dine with me today. I get a dish or two from the King's kitchen for them.

Now they are come from Court I don't hear a word more to add, therefore wish you a good journey, and hope to see you Saturday.

I am, y^r very affect. mo.

S. O.

LETTER XXXIV

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



The three next letters are full of the panic created by the Young Pretender's rebellion. Sir Danvers had joined the King's army, under the Duke of Cumberland.

STRATTON STREET, Dec. 9, 1745

MY DEAR DANVERS,—This will meet you so far south that I find my pen at liberty to tell you all I know. First, I have the pleasure to tell you both your boys are in perfect health, never had better spirits, . . . though they have never been out since you went, an odious northeast wind so long that I give them your apartment below, where they have room for exercise and keep quite well.

Your packet today in your bureau I received and disposed of it as you ordered. I have wrote every post to you, and told you so in one of my letters.

Wednesday last was the most dismal day I ever knew, it being believed here it was the day of battle: not only myself but every mortal in terror for their friends. No one doubted the rebel army being beat, but no one knew who would be the particulars to fall. By Friday these fears were over, and others succeeded which seized indeed the whole town; [there] was, I must say, a most shameful panic, but the express that came had that effect upon all sorts of people, as it seemed to assure that the rebels would be at Northampton that night, and in all probability at Barnet a Tuesday. The Councils sat all night; the army here was forming to march; Lord Stair was sent to Finchley to mark out the camp. The King to head this army, which people that could keep their senses thought must cut them to pieces. One terror added to the rest was a letter found on Count St. Germain, who was taken up, which



came from the rebel army, and said they hoped they should contrive to slip the Duke's army, and then make for the capital. They did not doubt another army would meet them, but when the King's forces marched out of London hoped their friends would have a general mass, and then the four Quarters rise, as he knew altogether the consternation of the whole town is not to be expressed. Thousands of the Pretender's declarations were threw about the Park and streets, every woman thinking where to run for safety, and every man getting arms and horses to go with the King, Brother Torrington among the rest. Lord Shannon was so good to take me and my children to Ashly, thinking across the water most safe. My mother to Columbine's, Benet to Cook's, Brook Street to Pinkwell. I found a place to hide what was necessary. Dr. Osborn was in town and thought it high time to remove the things from Chicksands. He went down that morning before the consternation was so great and sent Thomas Green with your two boxes a Sunday, which are now here, and £100 from Denbigh. I begged the plate [should] be buried anywhere near him, for [it was] impossible to trust that road by the wagon since we imagined the Highlanders would be at their heels. However, Saturday the terrors vanished, and then [we were] as sorry to hear the rebels had gone back. We are all angry with Duke Devonshire: 1,000 men that could do nothing, not even take stragglers, for we hear they lay down like dogs when they came to Derby, and what [. . . *illegible* . . .] they do run to Nottingham. In short we now laugh at one another for fearing what was the only thing to destroy them, which was to come on. Lord Sandwich we hear [is] extreme ill at Birginham. Lady Sandwich went down in the night a Saturday to him. I pity you to be a wagoner at last; however, I can't but say I have



much better spirits, knowing this will meet you at Woodstock.

No express today of consequence, and yet we flatter ourselves Wade must meet with them in their return. 'Tis shocking to have them go back and reinforce with 3,000 fresh men, which are ready in Scotland.

My Brother Jack's squadron has taken a ship with 210 men, most of them officers.

The prisoners came to the tower a Friday. 'Tis not yet clear if the Pretender's brother is there. They have strong suspicion still, but the Ministry don't choose to talk about it. Mrs. Williamson dined with them, and has given me the description. None yet has been sent to see if it is him or not. I fancy it is of no use yet to be sure of it, but we are most dreadfully alarmed at this embarkation. 14,000 lie at Dunkirk with transports, or rather small fishing vessels, and we have a hundred cutters gone to line all our coasts. 500 seamen came to the Admiralty a Saturday, and they could employ as many more. Waterman and all are gone. Some think they design to land in Norfolk, and that the rebels intended their march that way to meet them, but this is all conjecture. I have only time to give your sons' duty to you. George dreams of you every night, wakes with telling where you are, and when he heard them talk of the Pretender coming to St. James, he sighed and said "Where must Aunt Anne go then?" . . .

LETTER XXXV

LONDON, December 10, 1745

MY DEAR DANVERS,—I wrote you a long scratch last night at Woodstock which I hope you have received. I



begin this in the morning that I may have a little time to tell you of more things than what concerns rebels. One is that the murrain amongst the cattle has encreased prodigiously, that nothing but mutton can be bought here. I took the liberty to send for the hog you had fattening at Chicksands, and indeed of most things we eat from thence, as butter, bacon, fowls, greens. Here rabbits are bad and many other things, so that Mr. Denbigh keeps a separate account of all that comes for me, and I have ordered him to buy more hogs to fat, for mutton soon will be monstrous dear, now no one ventures any other meat in their house. Lambs is fed with milk. I find it reaches into the country. Thomas Green says it is among the cattle at Baldock from some infected cows that passed there. It is at Uxbridge and many other places. Many of them that give milk in the morning are dead at night. This would be a great calamity if the rebels were not a greater.

Lady Anne has given George a blue and silver coat, and Jack a pink and silver, much too fine for them, at least it were now, when there is not a soul to be seen but in night-gowns and tears. For my part I have not stirred out of my house since you went, not even to my mother but of a Sunday, though indeed never alone. If I had any opposite neighbors, they would think there was cabals here, since from eleven in the morning till 12 at night, there is no rest to my doors, some to tell and some to hear news. My friends I must say have all been very good to me, though such a month as this last have I never passed before.

By your steering to Oxford, I should imagine you will return to your Bedford station. I should really be glad to know how you and your men do, for such fatigues I fear, must try your constitutions. I pray God Wade may meet with these devils that have harassed you all at this rate. . . .

LETTER XXXVI

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



[*The Duke whose "answers" are commended was the Duke of Cumberland, soldier son of George II, who at twenty-five headed the forces which finally crushed the Pretender's rebellion at Culloden.*]

STRATTON STREET, May 17, 1746

My boys and I am got here together again, and hope it will not now be long before we see you. Lady Anne told me yesterday she heard the new regiments would be broke next week, though her news is not always certain. The Duke's answers to both Lords and Commons are much spoke of as being extremely well, with a very modest and pretty turn in them. If they are printed, you shall have them. I received your letter yesterday with that particular enclosed which you desire to be put in your scrutore [*escritoire?*]. I have the key, and shall do it tomorrow. I shall send down the writings to Doctor Osborn next Wednesday. John being still lame makes me behindhand in some of your orders. . . . The music shall go too if possible.

I have not missed one post writing; therefore, though you had none the day you wrote, yet I hope it came to you by the next. Though George is well to me, yet if you see him soon you will be frightened, for he is not the same child, and most monstrously disguised by a wig he has got on to-day. His hair is cut quite close, and as soon as his head can be shaved, it must be so, and his eyebrows too. He walks like a rickety child; in short I don't wish you to see him this two months. Even his voice is quite altered, and does not speak so plain as when you left him, but all these things are common from the weakness his illness re-

duced him to. He has as good if not better spirits than ever, but is very peevish. Jack looks like a ghost, but yet he is bright and in good spirits, and they say time will bring it all right again. . . .

The Burgoynes look as bad, and so indeed do the Fieldings. They lodge next door to us here. They lay great fault upon Sir Roger—they are all gone down to Sutton.

I am, yr very affec.,

S. O.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER XXXVII

KENSINGTON, June 14, 1746

The wind is still in the Duke of Bedford's teeth, and he no farther than Yarmouth. It also keeps the Prince of Hesse here. He does not go till he hears his troops are landed. He is called the drop to Lady Rochford's earring.

Thursday last was expected to be a day of battle in the House of Lords on sending our troops abroad, but there proved to be only two speakers. Lord Lonsdale, who spoke an hour against it, and was so well answered by the Duke of Newcastle that no one else attempted to say more, and the expected long day proved to be a very short one.

'Tis thought 'twill be August before the Lords can be tried. After some forms are past, the Peers must have twenty days' notice. Lady Cromarty is in town; has been at the Tower to enquire after her Lord. She was at Williamson's, and cried most bitterly, but no one is suffered so much as to look up at the windows. They were all brought into Williamson's, and from thence one by one conducted to their apartment. No one knows where the other is, and they are kept prodigious strict. Sure the King



of France has ordered a most insolent letter, and takes himself to be King of England, to forbid our punishing the rebels.

Is the Pretender got off or not? I wish they could have been beheaded at Edinburgh, and not make such a long piece of work as the forms will do here. 'Tis thought the Parliament will sit till August. I was not used to a lodging, and therefore not aware how sharp they are, but found my bills most immoderate, which my people told me they could not turn their backs but meat, bread, butter, &c., was stole away. I really believe they have keys themselves to take what is locked when they have opportunity. There was only the woman and girl in the house, but her husband and family live very near, and I daresay was all kept, but when Mother was to come I asked if she would leave the house to us, which she did, and now she is out; I shall keep her so after Mother goes, for it was intolerable. Indeed I believe it would have been much cheaper to have gone to Chicksands: eight guineas for lodging, and living has been very dear ever since we came.

Your son George lost his heart yesterday. A miss who came to visit next door came in the garden to him. He looked at her first with surprise, then slyly led her to the arbor where I was sitting, and desired me to set her up by him, which I did. After he had looked at her some time, he stroked her face, and kissed her. He then showed her his watch, gathered a rose, and brought it to her. You would have died with laughing to see the courtship. There was another girl not half so handsome: he never took the least notice of her, but Jack kissed them both, and was happy with either. As soon as George was up this morning, he desired to go into the garden to see if miss was there: a good fine girl indeed she is.

By a letter from Bath, Aunt Ann Master is better already: all the yellow gone from her eyes and skin. . . . I hope she will do well: her loss would be irreparable to my mother, who is cheerful and easy here, though a sad place for her to be in. There was a farmhouse that with a coach would have been very agreeable, but without one very inconvenient. I now wish to have it, but it is let. We go out airing every day, and your boys with us. . . .

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



I 7 5 0 - I 7 5 I

LETTER XXXVIII

This letter is written immediately after the death of Sarah's brother George, third Viscount Torrington. The "Brother Byng" referred to is her youngest brother Edward. "Daniel" is probably a brother of George's widow, whose family name it was.

STRATTON STREET, April 8, 1750

I cannot help sending to you. My brother Byng came to town this morning, seems much out of sorts that he is not named, is glad you are, that some one who has regard for the family is, outrageous that the house is given to Sister to have it took from Mother for that purpose. Daniel, I fear, has been too stiff with him. He asked Daniel what was Mother to do. He said he did not know. "Sure she is not to be turned out when she can live so short a time." He said [the] house was to be let.

For God's sake make my sister and Daniel sensible they



should not disoblige him. He seems vastly nettled with Daniel. I think he will act the lawyer and not the gentleman. Sure, they must live as they do for at least one twelvemonth: some credit to be thought of, some decency in regard to my mother. She should not be tossed about; cannot live long. Brother Byng talks of going down soon again, and therefore I do this that you may prepare Daniel, for if he and Sister do not think it worth while to oblige and give way in some measure, Brother Byng will forget he has that nephew. As he says, his brother forgot there was such an individual as himself. They may endeavor, but it will not be possible to let the house. They should at least offer him to be the person. He would like it, I daresay, on his own terms, which would be, perhaps, to keep it up, and he would keep Mother in it, at least till farther consideration. Let Sister go to Yotes if she likes it, but Mother must not be disgracefully hurried about. Daniel's surly temper will ruin his nephew, if he don't take care. You must soften it.

Are your boys to have grey, and who must make it for them? George puts on the man I assure you: looks and is very well. He set down immediately to write this as soon as he came home. He got a grammar in your room, and all done before I saw it: ruled it himself as you see, and being so awry, I ruled a paper for him, and he wrote it again this morning. He will go to Mrs. Hawkins tonight—says he got a place by telling a boy a word he did not know.

For God sake take care [of] Mother. Consider she is 80. Aunt Martha very ill—St. Anthony's fire.

I am, yr very affect.,
S. O.

LETTER XXXIX

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

*

[This letter in the form of a journal relates a number of events occurring between May and October, 1750. The Mr. Fox referred to under date of August 8 was Henry Fox, afterwards (1763) first Baron Holland. He had, in 1744, married secretly Lady Georgiana Caroline Lennox, eldest daughter of Charles, 2d Duke of Richmond. Her parents had refused their consent to the marriage, which created a great social sensation, as readers of Horace Walpole's letters will recall. It was not till after some years that the Duke and Duchess of Richmond became reconciled with their daughter. The "daughter married to ambitious views" was Lady Emilia Lennox, younger sister of Lady Georgiana; she had married the first Duke of Leinster. The marriage of Fox and Lady Georgiana was a peculiarly happy one. Their third son was the celebrated Charles James Fox.]

June 23.—Captain Sheldon took a house ready furnished at Ampthill for six guineas a year.

July 6.—Mr. Pecks died of a mortification, lifting a person over a gate. Her pocket hitched upon it, which he pressed upon to prevent her falling, and a small key burst through his body.

July 10, 11, 13.—The most extreme heat ever known in England, and indeed for ten days continued to a high degree.

July 16.—The most terrible thunder and lightning I ever heard. Hailstones as large as pigeons' eggs: some at Shefford three inches round.

19 July. Nat went to Southill at six in the morning to have Toby shod. A shepherd and dog came short from



a hedge upon him: he started and threw the boy, who lay some time not able to stir. The horse ran away, got his foot in the bridle which throwed him down just at South-ill gate. Cut his knees terribly: not able for Mr. Denbigh to ride till the week I came away.

The same evening Thom. Green rode Magot to water, and led the blind one, who soon began to plunge and turn round several times (has done so before in the stable, and had been blooded). Green at last obliged to quit the halter. The workmen and all ran to help, but could not save him or get him out till he was dead. The same day the grey horse was taken with a fever. Ben Squire attended him three weeks and then he died. Many people lost horses: such heat was hardly ever remembered, and they would work them in the middle of the day as usual. I then said we should kill all the horses if they would do so; but women are fools. I am unlucky in foreseeing events I cannot prevent. The workmen tiling, were like poor creatures on a gridiron: so spent, obliged to change the hours, and work early and late: Nutkins himself at 2 in the morning. But the poor horses could not groan out their suffering. Such extreme heat for so long were very unusual

Aug. 1.—Lady Torrington a month at Yotes: her mother ill, but old women don't die.

Aug. 8.—Duke of Richmond died of violent fever: 'twas said from the excessive heat at Installation. He has left all his houses and everything to the Duchess. Mr. Fox has behaved like an angel to her: shared all her afflictions and troubles. Such melancholy scenes have been there [as] is not to be repeated! How short is our light! The daughter married to ambitious views is a thorn in her side, while that which disobliged her, and was never to expect forgiveness, turns out her great and only comfort, both her and him showing the greatest tenderness.



Aug. 14.—Admiral Byng thrown down in his park by a buck . . . ; now gone to Bath, and surprisingly recovered.

Brother Peter Osborn is second Captain of Greenwich Hospital: £200 a year, an apartment there, coals, candle, brooms, etc. Prince and Princess of Wales three days at Portsmouth Dock. They were highly honored by their civilities: left 30 guineas to the servants.

Sep.—Mr. Alston to marry Miss Bovey. She is 19, has £1,500 a year, and £10,000 in money, which Sir Rowland takes, and settles Odell and £1,700 a year in present. Land won't pay bachelor debts, and odd jobs, wedding expenses, and fit up Odell, and then must be cramped for life. An upholsterer was sent down to furnish her house at Slow, where they are at present.

Harry Legge married to Lord Stowell's daughter, at present heiress apparent to £6,000 a year.

Burgoyne has the measles at Eton: is now brought down to Sutton, very far from well.

Earthquakes in Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, and the adjacent counties. Lord Halifax felt it at Horton, Lord Northampton at his house, Mr. Wright at his. No damage done, but it is very unpleasant to find the earth as unquiet as ourselves. I am very sure it was about the same time at Chicksands, none but myself awake in the house, and therefore none sensible of it, the jog and rattle of the windows the same as that in London. I own I was alarmed: got up and found it 2 o'clock, but none else has yet said it was felt in Bedfordshire.

Octr.—Lady Caroline Collier to have Sir Nathaniel Carson's son. Latham's mother dead and Medcalf's aunt. Eldest Miss Hotham dead.

Lady Hervey and her son, the Captain, gone to live at Paris: taken a house for two years. I wish I could buy her



house in the Park: they say it is to be sold. You will think it a mad wish.

Lord and Lady Halifax in town, neither of them well.

Lady Anne and her dear gone a progress into the North. Lumley Castle designed for Scotland, but I hear are returning.

Lady Betty in Warwickshire, very far from well.

Lady Bab at Bath: her Miss Robinson's Mr. Scott is made Preceptor to Prince George, and 'tis said Lord North his Governor; but I am told he is not to be called so, and sure upon no other foot can he serve him.

The Doctor [Osborn] is going the high road after his sister Betty if some care is not taken. He owned to me his life was a burden he was not able to bear, and many things when we meet will confirm my fears. Love and preferment are the foundations. God knows how it will end. Something should be done to take him from the present scene.

One of the Wandesfords married, the other going to live with Sister Margaret. Southill, Bennet Street, and all else I think as you left them, as is

yr. affect.

'Tis thought the King will be here next month, and no Parliament till after Xmas. The town is a desert; therefore [I] see no creature that knows truth.

Lord Plymouth married: poor girl, is it possible she can be happy? Your boys both very well, long for your return, send duty.

Mr. Beacher struck with dead palsy the day before I left Bedfordshire, but don't hear yet he is dead.

I forget if Brownsell died before you went, and left all to Orlebar.

You don't like letters; therefore [I] only send you a sort of journal.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

LETTER XL

[The Lady Temple whose portrait is mentioned was Dorothy Osborn, whose letters to Sir William during their long engagement are so justly famous.]

*

LONDON, October 14, 1750

Halkins and Pears have finished all you ordered. The roof could not be done before harvest: the fear of weather spoiling the ceilings obliged me to let them be ten days in the harvest to finish it.

The bedchamber, drawing-room, and anteroom floors are laid, but not planed, as there will be whitewashing and painting, &c., next year. Everyone and even Pears himself said it was better it should be the last thing done. The stairs are done, and broom closet put up on them, also the corner dressing-room, and boards put to the windows there. The anteroom and drawing-room chimneys are finished, and all the windows as you ordered. The anteroom chimney does not smoke: the other I did not try.

The chimney wall in the little green room was not dry enough to put up the green paper.

The tapestry is packed up in the gallery for you to approve. I could not undertake to finish it without your opinion. There is enough for one side and both ends, and if you would give up any carpets, near half enough for the other side. Bradshaw says he has some will match, that will come as cheap as paper. The pictures are all collected together and packed up in the anteroom, except the one over



your harpsichord, which I did not care to remove. Lady Temple is there, also the Scripture piece removed from this parlor, and from being a cut-throat room, [it] will, I daresay, when finished, be the most agreeable one in the house. Many that were at Chicksands this summer said that [the] half-length philosopher, as we called it, was a very good one. A person who knew it said it was Dun Scotus, a very learned man, who lived in the fourteenth century, as is known by [a] manuscript of his own at Oxford.

There is no tapestry behind the Reformers in the bed-chamber, therefore they remain as they were.

The library is very well cleaned: some books there was spoilt with mould.

Murther's odd jobs were double what you expected, and the carpenter did not end till Michaelmas day, and came to more also: the one three shillings and the other four shillings. Extraordinary. No fresh order to either, only finished what you ordered. All is paid to the day I came away, and no workman left there.

I sent George up with George Byng, who came down with him, and spent the holidays at Chicksands. Lord Torrington, Robert Byng, and Bullock, and K. Scott were at Southill, so they all came and went together, and was exact to the school time. I stayed a fortnight after to see all clean. Everything left perfectly so when I came away, but you must not expect it will keep from vermin without a maid in it. Mary Meagar, who married from me last year, has offered her services, and was when with me a very good servant, but I could say to her no more than that I would recommend her if you took anyone. Indeed your house will suffer more than six times her wages, and even now that only four men are left they must hire to wash, etc.

LETTER XLI

STRATTON STREET, April 9, 1751

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



George has been extremely ill since Sunday. I could no longer than that day defer sending for Cox. Both he and I, who indeed have no judgment, thought him very bad He greatly relieved him; at night he was blistered and is better today, and at present in no danger, though not yet able to lift his head from the pillow.

This has been repeated neglected colds. Two guineas a month ago had saved many now, for this is attended with much expense. Cox has had three guineas already, and been here twice a day for it. Guy and Hicks with blisters, bleeding, etc. Latham's illness has been terrible, too, and most unlucky at this time: not yet out of her bed, except an hour or two in the day. Master John has a dreadful hoarse cough, but hope to prevent his being ill. Ass's milk has already made him better, and no one able to be about them but myself, who should be in bed too, if old fashion affection did not keep me in their service, for there is much more to do than you imagine. George is in your bed, Jack in mine. Sister Margaret Osborn sat up last night, and today I have got Simpson, for I have not been in bed two hours at a time these five nights. 'Tis unlucky to employ so many people, but no remedy now. All this will incur your further displeasure, but I am unable to help it. When they are in other hands, I hope many expenses will be saved, though I wish you may not find experiments of their constitutions fatal.

I am, yr affect.

S. O.

LETTER XLII.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

[*An account of the duel here discussed will be found in "The Gentleman's Magazine" for May 1751.*]

STRATTON STREET, May 28, 1751



The duel which was in the papers last Saturday is a most melancholy affair. Mr. Dalton was very soon to marry one of the Miss Greens, and a snuff box which he had given her was taken from her by Mr. Paul, who told her she took so much snuff that he would keep it. Dalton said he insisted he should not, but give it to him, so from jest to earnest wrested it out of his hand, and Miss Green had her box returned. At night Paul went to Dalton's house in Hill Street: not finding him at home, he sat down in his parlor, wrote a letter in which he said he had used him roughly, and that he expected he should ask his pardon, or give him satisfaction like a gentleman, and sent his servant with it where he supped, and to say that he should wait there till he came home, which he immediately did. Both their chairs waited at the door, and they sent the servant to stay in the kitchen till they called, and not to let anyone in that knocked. Dalton said, if they must fight, the present time was best, so [they] drewed their swords. In the scuffle the candles and tables were thrown down, and one of them said, "Don't let us fight in the dark: peace till we fetch the candle out of the hall," but it was soon over, and Paul went out of the door, gave his chairmen two shillings to discharge them, and went for Hawkins the surgeon (the only circumstances in his favor) to go for Dalton, for he believed he had killed him, then run to Lord Ravensworth to tell him his misfortune, who advised



him to get off directly. 'Tis only from what he told Lord Ravensworth that the above particulars are known, for the poor man never spoke. Upon the street door shutting, the servant ran up; found his master stone dead upon the floor. He ran to Mr. Wright in Grove Street, who was Dalton's uncle. They sent for Middleton, who came ten minutes before Hawkins. [It was] therefore suspected Paul did not go to Hawkins till he was advised to do so. They found the challenge in Dalton's pocket, and the appearance of a very unfair wound, it being on the contrary side of his heart and lungs. The swords both lay by him. Dalton's was much hacked, and all tallow. He knew nothing of a sword, and the other fenced well; nevertheless most people think he had the mortal wound after he was down, though the surgeons endeavor to make it possible to be otherways. The coroner's inquest was not finished till last night, and brought it in wilful murder.

Dalton's father lost another son this week of the small-pox, and Miss Green has neither shut her eyes or spoke since. I pity Paul's parents, but he did this too premeditated to escape hanging.

Miss Bishop is to have Sir William Maynhard. He settles very handsome: desires no present fortune, but to have her share with the others when Sir Cecil dies. I dare-say she will make him a good wife. Gratitude ought to make her do it.

This is Sir Cecil's lucky year. His mother has died, by whom he has got £2,000 a year; he has also a place of £500 a year in the Ordnance; his son is page to the Prince of Wales; and his daughter to be soon so well married.

Large families in general are more lucky than small ones. Too much anxiety is not pleasing to Heaven: I hardly ever knew it succeed. Self, self, self can never

prosper, for happiness or content is not to be purchased by money.

LETTER XLIII

LONDON, June 19, 1751

George is as much better as possible. He set in my dressing-room yesterday, and today has been in the park: is weak but well, eats and sleeps, and therefore I hope will be fit for school Sunday evening. I went to Westminster last night, found poor Jack in tears; [he] had been taken ill about half an hour. . . . I am an unfortunate mortal: always run into the mouth of some ill luck or other, and therefore instinct carried me down to see him. You three divide my heart; therefore if you think I shall be too far from them, I will not go to Brother Byng this summer.

I conclude I may send for Master John to dinner on Sunday. I shall send again to know how he is.

I am yr affect.

S. O.

I have seen the plan of Lord Berkeley's ground. It is 120 feet deep, and stables are to be where Philips says, but you see I pay the ground rent of those stables. . . .

George is gone: sends his duty, but says he must not write to you till Saturday.

LETTER XLIV

STRATTON STREET, June 29, 1751

Both your sons are very well: I sent John this evening. They dine at Sister Byng's tomorrow. I conclude you gave them order if you would have them write to you.



Mr. King, my landlord, has his new house, just finished, entirely burnt down: 'tis thought to be maliciously done. I suppose the workmen were disobliged that he had not been generous to them. 'Tis terrible we are brought to be subject to the mob.

Lord Tilney went from Wansted, as his family thought, to London for a few days, but he wrote to his sister from thence that he was going to Paris and perhaps to Italy for three years. The town says he is gone with Lord Southwell and Strickland to Spa, and that they will fill their pockets before they part with him.

The Princess of Wales returns to Leicester House to-morrow.

I am, yr affect.

S. O.

LETTER XLV

STRATTON STREET, July 30, 1751

MY DEAR DANVERS,—I have a presentiment of coming evil to our family; why, I know not, but 'tis to be hoped I am mistaken. We have had enough, God knows, but if it comes, we must meet it with fortitude and resignation. At present we are all well here.

Lord and Lady Torrington and Daniel came to Kits End by ten a Sunday, and he stayed there last night, and dined with Sister Torrington at Hendon. 'Tis to be much hoped that they went on well together, and that she held her tongue in check. Women sometimes find it hard to do so, they say, though I don't find it so.

Sister Torrington is again ill with some distressing indisposition: kept her bed Saturday and Sunday, but is better.



Sister Torrington returned to Southill today in Brother's chariot to Stevenage, but they would not let her go alone; so Ned, though very bad, was good-natured and went with her. They were to take postchaise from Stevenage, and after he had baited himself and horses, he returns the same way to Stevenage, and then in Brother's chariot home.

I cannot say Sister Margaret Osborn met with so much complaisance, for the Doctor [Osborn] forgot to send his chariot, so that when she came to Wellwyn she was distressed, and obliged to take a postchaise to Stevenage, and there was none to come farther, but one that the poor horses were just come in and tired. However, she and the postillions came along, and I suppose she had not a joyful meeting with the Doctor, for both would be out of humor. I must say it was a very disagreeable thing to go alone in that manner, but there is a roughness in the blood of the Osborns that one does not generally meet with. Duke of St. Albans died a Saturday. Some give the Constable[ship] of Windsor to the Duke, as it greatly interferes with the forest, and all his territories thereabout.

There is not a syllable of news, at least that I hear. The town is now empty, and I have not seen a soul except Brother Byng. This morning he brought Nephew Torrington as he was carrying him to school. He desired me to say that he fears Joynes has forgot the model of your large roller; he begs you will refresh his memory.

He believes he shall go to Southill for few days at Bartholomew's, to carry the boy, and then he will give him something, but he did not bid me say so.

You will be tired reading nonsense from

your very affec. Mother,
S. O.

LETTER XLVI

CHICKSANDS, September 3, 1751

LETTER
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



The reason I trouble you with this is only being Brother Byng's secretary. He intends spending a week at Southill, and my Sister Byng is to go with him there. If it suit your schemes to have all the boys come up as they went down, he will pay half the coach, and Sister and he go down in it to Southill. This is no proposition of mine, and I wish they would write their own letters and not trouble me with what I have nothing to do.

He also desires to know what day you fix for the boys to come, that they may be ready to your time. They propose a postchaise back to Stevenage, but that I have no commission to say, and indeed needless to add that [with] a large coach and cold weather Latham might squeeze in. To oblige you I shall not be of their party. I wish you would let George add in his letter to me that you had received Harding's note from me. . . .

Sunday Brother Edward went to Kits End for some time, and I with him for a few hours' visit. I never saw the owner better: quite happy there, talks of keeping it warm the whole winter; spends his time cheerfully and comfortably with his "Old Dame," as he calls her. What matter what it is? If people can be happy at pushpin, 'tis as entertaining to them as the most refined satisfaction to those of a more exalted genius. Since happiness is not confined to any situation, and it is a very vain pursuit, I conclude it praiseworthy to let the mind fall till it sinks into nothing, and forget what God created us for.

Poor Edward I left there: I think worse than ever I saw him. He says he went ill to Danbury, and was so all



the time he was there. I am sure [he] was very bad all the week he was in town, . . . cannot eat, nor has strength or spirit left. Whether the "Old Dame" can nurse him up or not I cannot say, but 'tis melancholy to see him so. Instead of growing hardened as I grow older, I every day find myself less fit for this world. Such a crowd of disagreeable reflections pressed upon me as I returned from my visit, that I cannot even yet shake off the effect of it from my mind.

I am and must ever be,
your very affectionate Mother,
S. OSBORN

Lady Pembroke to marry Captain Barnet of the Guards, a very agreeable man, some thousands less than nothing, but her lord left her £1,200 to assist him. Thanks for the cucumbers.

LETTER XLVII

[This is the last letter extant from Mrs. Osborn to her son, whose death occurred in 1753.]

STRATTON STREET, Oct. 3, 1751

I believe I shall not set out from Southill till near Wednesday, unless worse letters should come from there, so that if it is convenient to you to send a horse for John to Hatfield on Tuesday, I should be obliged to you, but don't do it without it is so. If we find one there, it is well; if not, that will be well, too. What slow journeys we make in these days! It takes days to get to where our wishes are to be. Will it always be so?

Poor Edward still ill . . . 'Tis shocking to see all our family going before one. How few left!

The Admiral here, and pretty well: desires me to add his respects, with the affection of

yours,

S. O.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



I am now 58 years old, wishing time to be no more, but that must be as Heaven decrees.



DOCUMENTS

concerning the case of Mrs. Osborn's brother

ADMIRAL BYNG

[In the year 1756, when repeated advice had been received at London that the French meditated a descent upon the island of Minorca, Admiral Byng was selected to command a fleet for the defense of that place. He protested to headquarters that the means given him were insufficient, and in the outcome, although he engaged with the French, he refused to sacrifice what ships and men he had in order to follow up the first battle. Minorca fell into the hands of the French, and feeling against the Admiral ran very high in England. Byng was brought back to be tried by court-martial; he was acquitted of the charges of cowardice and disaffection, but convicted of an error in judgment. He was sentenced to be shot, with a strong recommendation to mercy. In spite of the popu-



lar clamor against him, many persons espoused his cause and threw the blame of the disaster on the Ministry for having provided him with a fleet quite inadequate to the task imposed on him. Pitt pleaded his cause in person with the King, and reported that the House of Commons seemed inclined to mercy, but it was evident that there was to be no reprieve for Byng. His sentence was carried out on March 14, 1757, on board the *Monarque*, where he met his fate with great courage. In justice to the court it must be said that scandals in the war of 1745 had led to a revision of the Articles of War which left the judges no choice but to condemn an officer who did not do his utmost against the enemy under any circumstances. Byng's case was the first to be decided under the new ruling, and could not well have been overlooked. Among the papers at Chicksands Priory is a testimonial to the Admiral's reputation written to Voltaire by the Duke of Richelieu, who commanded the French forces in the disastrous engagement. Voltaire himself enclosed it to Admiral Byng in the following letter, dated January 2, 1757, and written from his retreat at *Les Délices*, near Geneva.]

"SIR,—Though I am almost unknown to you, I think 'tis my duty to send you the copy of the letter which I have just received from the Marshal Duke of Richelieu. Honor, humanity, and equity order me to convey it into your hands. This noble and unexpected testimony from one of the most candid, as well as the most generous of my countrymen, makes me presume your Judges will do you the same justice.

"I am, with respect,

"your most humble obedient servant,

"VOLTAIRE"

*Copy of the Duc de Richelieu's letter, written at Paris,
December 26, 1756.*

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



“Le sort de l'Amiral Byng me fait grand pitié. Je vous assure que tout ce que j'ai vu et su de lui ne devait tourner qu' à sa gloire; elle ne doit point être attaquée quand on a été battu, après avoir fait tout ce qu'on pouvait attendre. Il faut bien que quand deux honnêtes gens se battent, il y en ait un qui ait du désavantage, sans que cela lui fasse tort. Toutes les manœuvres de l'Amiral Byng ont été admirables, au dire naturel de tous nos marins, les forces étaient au moins égales, puisque les Anglais avaient treize vaisseaux, et que nous en avions douze avec des équipages plus nombreux et plus frais. Le hasard qui préside à tous les combats, et surtout à ceux de mer, nous fut plus favorable en envoyant plus de nos boulets dans les manœuvres des Anglais, et il me semble qu'il est généralement reconnu que si les Anglais s'étaient obstinés, leur flotte aurait été perdue, de sorte qu'il n'y a jamais eu d'injustice plus criante que celle qu'on voudrait faire à l'Amiral Byng, et tout homme d'honneur et tout militaire surtout doit s'y intéresser.”

[*The following documents consist of two letters written by Mrs. Osborn to the Duke of Bedford, including a copy of her appeal to the Lords of the Admiralty, and the Duke's answer to her first petition to him. Mrs. Osborn's first letter is copied from the Bedford Papers, vol. xxxiii, fol. 67. In it she alludes to a tragedy in the Duke's family comparable to that of Admiral Byng; this was the execution of the "patriot Lord Russell" in 1683, for alleged conspiracy against the Stuarts.*]

Feb. 5, 1757

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

✱

MY LORD,—The present distress of our family must plead with Your Grace for my attempting to intrude on your quiet hours at Woburn, to represent our own melancholy situation. 'Tho' my unhappy brother's fate will, I hope, sufficiently justify an application to one of the Duke of Bedford's character, even yet I should not have dared to have troubled Your Grace, were not my brother's sufferings already such as scarce any crime could have imposed. Ignominiously suspended, most ignominiously aspersed, and inhumanely traduced throughout the world, on suppositions which his family must have shared the disgrace of, and from which not even his father's services to this nation could have afforded a shadow of refuge, had they not been as amply disproved, and he as justly acquitted of.

Under these circumstances, may I implore Your Grace to consider the sentence he lies under, which is generally thought as illegal as severe. My nephew Torrington has therefore ventured to petition the King in his favor, and as we are informed this extraordinary case may be referred to the Cabinet Council, we hope it will be at a time when Your Grace is present. If we are so fortunate as to have that so, we entreat your compassion and known disposition to justice may unite in leaning towards that mercy which has been so earnestly recommended by the court-martial. Your Grace's family lost one of the noblest blossoms from unjust oppression: to whom then can I better address myself than to one, who in every action of life has showed a detestation of it in whatsoever shape it has appeared.

Pity, my Lord, a distressed sister, surrounded only by weeping females, and helpless boys, who will all owe grate-

ful acknowledgments of their future happiness to the influence the Duke of Bedford must always have, when justice and mercy are the objects of his care.

I am, my Lord Duke,
Your Grace's most obedient servant,
S. OSBORN

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



[*The Duke's answer*]

"MADAM,—I am but just able, thro' extreme weakness of my right hand occasioned by the gout, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter. All I can at present say in answer to it, is, that in case His Majesty shall be pleased to refer the sentence of the court-martial to His Cabinet Council, nothing but absolute incapacity on account of health shall prevent my attending it, and I shall be very happy if upon a strict examination into the proceedings of the court-martial, I shall find myself at liberty to adopt those sentiments of mercy which that court has so strongly recommended to His Majesty, as no one has a more real regard for yourself and Lord Torrington and his family than myself.

"I am, your sincere and humble servant,
"BEDFORD"

[*Mrs. Osborn's second letter; a copy from the Bedford Papers, vol. xxxiii, fol. 86.*]

CHARLES STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE,
Friday morning, Feb. 18

MY LORD,—Your Grace's friendly reception of me the other day, and the concern you was pleased to express for my unfortunate brother, encourages me to enclose to Your Grace the letter I sent yesterday to the Lords of the Ad-



miralty as the last efforts with 'Their Lordships that an unhappy sister can make. 'The reasons I have troubled them with in my brother's behalf are briefly stated, but I hope Your Grace will think they have their weight; indeed, my Lord, it is terrible to think of my poor brother's execution being ordered in consequence of a sentence in a great degree appealed from by those who passed it, not understood by the world, and passed under a law doubtful and unexplained. The hardship of my brother's approaching fate is every hour more and more felt, tho' I have never yet heard of the case having been laid before His Majesty with the alleviating circumstances that attend it. A cruel and false notion that His Majesty is disinclined to mercy on this occasion has probably prevented it.

I have no right, God knows, my Lord, to ask any such favor of Your Grace, but as you are a friend to justice, to truth and to mercy, and if I may venture to add, a friend to our afflicted family, I flatter myself that any steps Your Grace shall think proper to take in the obtaining His Majesty's mercy, or at least, clearing up this dark affair, may at the same time, as it saves my innocent brother's life, to which tho' he himself may be indifferent, his unfortunate sister wishes to preserve, do eternal honor to Your Grace's name.

It may be proper to inform Your Grace that Admiral Forbes refused signing the order for execution, and has given Lord Temple his reasons in writing for such refusal, which he has desired him to lay before the King.

I am,
my Lord Duke,
Your Grace's most obliged and obedient
humble servant,

S. OSBORN

[*Copy of the Letter to the Lords of the Admiralty inclosed in that of the Honorable Mrs. Osborn dated Feb. 18, 1757.*]

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



MY LORDS,—The judges having reported to His Majesty in Council, that the sentence passed on my unfortunate brother is a legal one, permit me to implore Your Lordships' intercession with His Majesty for his most gracious mercy, and to hope Your Lordships will not think an afflicted sister's application ill-founded in a case so hardly circumstanced, and which the judges (tho' by the severity of the law they have thought themselves obliged to pronounce the fatal sentence) have recommended to Your Lordships' humanity—to [your] justice I will not presume to add; tho' in their letter to Your Lordships they say that in justice to the prisoner as well as for their own consciences' sake they recommend him to His Majesty's mercy.

The court-martial, My Lords, seem to have acquitted my unhappy brother of cowardice and disaffection, and therefore it is presumed he stands sentenced under the head of negligence. It is not fitting perhaps that a wretched woman as I am should offer any arguments in my brother's behalf to Your Lordships, who are masters of the whole, but what criminal negligence, My Lords, can there have been in which neither cowardice nor disaffection have had a part? What criminal negligence can there have been since the judges have thought it incumbent on them for their own consciences' sake and in justice to the prisoner to recommend him to His Majesty's mercy? I must submit to Your Lordships whether it be the meaning of the law that every kind of negligence, wilful or not, should be punished with death: if so, it is not for me to make an observation on the laws; if not, and negligence arising neither from cowardice,



disaffection, nor wilfulness, ought not according to the spirit and intention of the law to be deemed capital, why, My Lords, should my poor brother suffer, when both the sentence by which he is condemned and the letter to Your Lordships by which he is so strongly recommended to His Majesty's mercy fully prove that his judges do not deem him deserving of the punishment they thought themselves obliged to sentence him to?

I hope Your Lordships will not think he ought to suffer either under a law unexplained or doubtful, or under a sentence erroneously passed. If the law has been misunderstood, and my unfortunate brother hath been condemned under the Twelfth Article according to the spirit and meaning of which he should not have been condemned, I submit to Your Lordships whether his life should be the forfeit.

If there is a doubt on the principles and motives that induced the court-martial to entreat the intercession of Your Lordships with His Majesty for mercy, I submit to Your Lordships, whether those motives should not be more fully explained before it be too late. It would be needless to mention the usual course of His Majesty's mercy to the condemned upon the application of his judges, if my unhappy brother's case had circumstances particularly unfavorable in it; but as on the contrary for the reasons I have ventured briefly to offer, and the many others that must occur to Your Lordships, his case appears to be uncommonly hard and well deserving of that mercy to which his judges have so earnestly recommended him, I hope I shall stand excused if I beseech Your Lordships' immediate intercession with His Majesty in his behalf.—I am, &c.

Admiral Byng's last letter to his sister, dated March 12, 1757, is endorsed in her handwriting, "My brother from

on board the Monarque, the last letter from him, the 14th being the fatal day appointed for him to die, to the Perpetual disgrace of Public Justice."

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



"MY DEAR, DEAR SISTER,—I can only with my last breath thank you over and over again for all your endeavors to serve me in my present situation. All has proved fruitless, but nothing wanting in you that could be done. God forever bless you is the sincere prayers of your most affect Bro.

"J. BYNG

"Enclosed I send you a receipt for Bro. Edward's legacy, which you will do me the favor to accept of as a small token of my affection to you."

*The succeeding document is also endorsed by Mrs. Osborn:
"The original paper wrote by my unfortunate and injured brother, Admiral Byng, given by him to Mr. Brough the Marshall a few minutes before his death, March 14, 1757."*

"ON BOARD HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP *MONARQUE*,
IN PORTSMOUTH HARBOR

"A few moments will now deliver me from the virulent persecution, and frustrate the farther malice of my enemies—nor need I envy them a life subject to the sensations my injuries and the injustice done me must create. Persuaded I am, justice will be done to my reputation hereafter. The manner and cause of raising and keeping up the popular clamor and prejudice against me, will be seen thro'. I shall be considered (as I now perceive myself) a victim destined



to divert the indignation and resentment of an injured and deluded people from the proper objects. My enemies themselves must even now think me innocent. Happy for me at this my last moment, that I know my own innocence, and am conscious that no part of my country's misfortunes can be owing to me. I heartily wish the shedding my blood may contribute to the happiness and service of my country, but cannot resign my just claim to a faithful discharge of my duty, according to the best of my judgment, and the utmost exertion of my ability for His Majesty's honor and my country's service. I am sorry that my endeavors were not attended with more success, and that the armament under my command proved too weak to succeed in an expedition of such moment. Truth has prevailed over calumny and falsehood, and justice has wiped off the ignominious stain of my supposed want of personal courage, or disaffection. My heart acquits me of these crimes, but who can be presumptuously sure of his own judgment? If my crime is an error in judgment, or differing in opinion from my judges, and if yet the error in judgment should be on their side, God forgive them, as I do, and may the distress of their minds and uneasiness of their consciences, which in justice to me they have represented, be relieved and subside as my resentment has done. The Supreme Judge sees all hearts and motives, and to Him I must submit the justice of my cause.

"J. BYNG."

Admiral Byng was fifty-three years old at the time of his death. He was buried at Southill, Bedfordshire, with this inscription on his monument:

TO THE PERPETUAL DISGRACE OF PUBLICK JUSTICE
THE HONble JOHN BYNG, ESQre
ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET
FELL A MARTYR TO POLITICAL PERSECUTION
MARCH 14TH IN THE YEAR 1757, WHEN
BRAVERY AND LOYALTY
WERE INSUFFICIENT SECURITIES FOR THE
LIFE AND HONOUR
OF A NAVAL OFFICER

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



There is a small print of Admiral Byng at Chicksands Priory, at the back of which Mrs. Osborn has inscribed these words:

“The Honourable John Byng,
Admiral of the Blue,
4th Son of George, Lord Viscount Torrington,
Suffered Political Martyrdom, March 14, 1757,
Whose Memory may this Picture perpetuate,
and at the same time, the depravity of an age
When Publick Justice was prostituted to Private Policy,
And Guilt found protection in the
Blood of the Innocent.
When approved Courage and unimpeached Loyalty
confirmed by a forty years faithfull Service,
Were ineffectual Securities for the
Life and Honour
of a British Commander against the
Mistaken resentment of a deluded Populace
and the
Interested Persecution of a State Junto.”

LETTER XLVIII

*

[In 1766 Mrs. Osborn was seventy-three, and her only two near relatives were her grandsons, Sir George Osborn and his brother John, to whom her letters are now addressed. Sir George is occupied with politics and his regimental duties; the younger brother has just started for Naples to be attached to the Embassy there, is not very happy about his prospects, and is complaining that his uncle, Lord Halifax, has not sufficiently exerted himself in his interest. The "hero of the day," or, as later he is to be called, "our sole guide," etc., is the elder Pitt. The Scot whom he is quoted as denouncing is Lord Bute, no longer of the Ministry but believed to have still a very strong influence with the King. Conway was Secretary of State; Townshend, Paymaster of the Forces; Rigby, Secretary to the Duke of Bedford (lately become Lord Lieutenant of Ireland).]

CHARLES STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE
January 17, 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Since I received your last letter the day before you was to embark at Marseilles, I have not wrote to you. . . . You said we must not expect to hear from you till February. I am all impatience for that time, in hopes it may bring a good account of your arrival at Naples, and that you have fixed yourself to your satisfaction there.

I must say you have judged well not to come home. It

is the most severe winter I have felt ever before. Every mortal [has] terrible coughs with oppression.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



Your brother was all day last Tuesday at the House. The man so much adored and feared was the hero of the day. No one dare speak or reply except his brother, whom he attacked severely. He defied all law; set it at nought; blamed the past and present; had never connected with any set that had not deceived him; he saw no ministers there, only men who had got on the horse of liberty to ride into places, and then put their horse in the stable. In short, he decried all sorts and declared his opinion to repeal the Stamp Act, and never to connect with anyone while there remained so strong an influence from one man. He did not mean to be mistook, did not mean anyone born in England, but on the other side the Tweed. Conway only replied that he had got on the "horse of liberty" for his country's service, had been unwillingly drove into place, was ready to turn his horse's head back to the state he was before, yet acknowledged he would serve with pleasure under him. Sure that was mean! Charles Townshend had not a word to say, or indeed anyone else. Rigby called for all the intelligence from America to be printed, which was granted. They did not know the consequence (young in office, indeed!). When they found Bedford lost the same in the other House, they saw their error, and are this day making a strong effort to get that resolution repealed. This is a specimen of the very disagreeable and unsteady situation. You may communicate to Lord Hillsborough, and then burn it directly. . . . If the act is repealed, God alone knows the consequence. I tremble.

The match quite fixed with Lady Betty [Montagu] and Lord Hinchinbroke. Each father gives £1,000 a year. Your uncle seems happy to dispose of her to rank and fortune.



The town is very full: the streets in such a condition coaches are overturned every day; the frost so hard pick-axes cannot mend them.

Lord George Sackville you will see is brought forth again. Great murmuring about it: none of the Ministers own it their act, and Mr. Pitt is excessively disgusted at that measure as well as others.

My dear Jack, adieu. Beaufort, Ossory, and all the young men come home: Wilkes, too, some say, and some not.

S. O.

LETTER XLIX

CHARLES STREET, LONDON, February 10, 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Matters have been in such confusion and uncertainties—indeed little better now, but next Thursday is hoped will end something to purpose. The present ministry, by George Byng's intelligence, seem certain to carry the point of repeal. The others think different. 'Tis thought a fortnight more must pass before the present agitations can produce change. [The] King cannot speak, which is a great misfortune in his situation Honest men cannot be in high stations without the knowledge necessary to support themselves, but of whom or what the next can be composed staggers the wisest among us; and what can spring forth from a time almost unknown is hard to guess. Not a happy face to be seen. . . .

Lord Halifax has received your letter, and I hope to have the satisfaction of hearing you are better, which will bring comfort to your truly affect.

S. O.

LETTER L

February 14, 1766

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



MY DEAR JACK,—I grieve to find you have been so much worse than you communicated to me. We have had the most severe winter, with fogs and all the variety of bad weather that the heavens could pour down upon us.

'Tis impossible to paint to you the horror of our situation. Had you been happy in your wishes, all must now have vanished. 'Tis inconceivable the cloud on every brow. In the present aspect no one in their senses would wish for power.

My dear Jack, I am concerned you set alone and encourage disagreeable thoughts. I, who am not apt to flatter myself with vain hopes and false valuations, yet think you have neither lost your time, or have taken any step to reproach yourself [with] Every day more and more perplexes, and it must be a bold man who will undertake to set us right. While it rests as it is, you or any friend you have cannot wish you a part in such a dismal whole.

Nothing doing, or can be done in both Houses; but the American affair, in whatever way it is settled, will be a millstone about the neck of the present or any future ministry. Great violence on all sides—very terrifying consequences.

Next Sunday we put off black gloves for Prince Frederick: King of Denmark and Dauphin still to be mourned for.

LETTER LI

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

CHARLES STREET, Feb. 25, 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Your brother has run away, and left me to add that the House sits every day, till half after ten, but last night till 2 this morning. I think there must be a fresh set soon, for these will all be demolished. A sad, very sad situation indeed we are in. We have gone on week after week, and lately have thought every new day would produce new events, but I see no end to our distresses. When this bill is finished, there must be [a] settled plan to affairs, but God knows how the scale will turn: those in and those out equally unhappy, nor do I see any one prospect to be better. . . .

Mr. Fox was certainly refused (whatever was thought abroad) when he made his last proposal here to Miss Greville. She could not bring herself to consent, and therefore he told his friend Crew she was the woman to make him happy. He followed his advice and proposed immediately, was accepted, and the conclusion [is] to be directly, to the amazement of the town that one so much in love as Fox was, should not only resign but give her to another. She, however, is a lucky girl, and the envy of all the young women in town.

Lord and Lady Torrington come to Whitehall for the winter. She is a very agreeable, sensible woman, and I think will make him happy.

I can only add your brother's affections to those of, my dear Jack, your truly affect. Gra. and faithful servant.

In conversation at Bushey, I find my Lord has set his seal upon Ireland. His, I doubt, has been an unfortunate step that he will repent. He is, I find, much blamed.

LETTER LII

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



[*The Lady Betty Montagu whose marriage is referred to in this letter was the only surviving daughter of the last Earl of Halifax. (See the announcement of the match on p. 93.) She was therefore a first cousin of Mrs. Osborn's grandsons. Her bridegroom's name was also Montagu; he was Viscount Hinchinbroke, oldest son of John Montagu, fourth Earl of Sandwich, a nobleman who figures largely both in the political history and in the scandalous chronicles of his times. He was the holder of numerous cabinet positions, and a notorious political jobber; his reputation was permanently injured by the part he took in the prosecution of Wilkes, his friend in private life. It will be observed that Mrs. Osborn mentions in her correspondence no less than four ennobled families of Montagus—those, that is to say, of the Dukes of Manchester and Montagu, and of the Earls of Halifax and Sandwich.*]

14 March 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Your brother . . . has acquainted you with our political wrangles. The repeal has gone in the Commons, and in the Lords by a majority of 12. However, the third reading of the bill is to be next Monday, when fresh arguments are to be brought, and very many lords intend to protest. Your uncle will be of that number. When that is over, 'tis said there will be some changes. Pitt [is] to take the lead to quiet the nation, and bring good out of evil if possible. . . .

Last Saturday Lady Betty Montagu was married at her father's house by Dr. Crane. The company were the two fathers, Lady Caroline, and Mr. Seymour, half-brother to



Lord Sandwich, which with Mr. Melvil and myself were the whole. After the ceremony we had a fine breakfast, and in half an hour, Lord Hinchinbroke led his lady into an extreme neat genteel post chaise, with four exceedingly pretty bright bay horses, which galloped all the way to Bushey. Then Lord Sandwich led me into Lord Halifax's post coach, and followed himself, with poor Melvil hopping after, and Lord Halifax completed the set. We followed almost in gallop too, and were at Bushey in an hour and [a] half, where young Montagu came from Eton to meet us. We all stayed there till Monday morning, when the two lords hastened to their debates, and I to rest in my own house, after two long days heartily tired. We left bride and bridegroom there with Melvil. They were to come up tomorrow to their house in Audley Street, but your Uncle Lumley dying this morning prevents that, as it will not be proper they should be presented till he is buried.

Lord Scarborough and Lord Halifax met this evening to open the will The town says Lumley to Lord Scarborough, with the house in town, and great mortgages on both; Stansted to Lord Halifax, coal mines, etc., to the value of £100,000: great mortgages also on them.

Mr. Crew and Miss Greville, Duke of Beaufort and Miss Boscawen, Lord Strathmore and Miss Bowes, were the dancing lovers last night at Almack's. These three weddings are to be celebrated as soon as the lawyers can finish.

It seems Beaufort was in love with Boscawen before he left England. Duchess Beaufort cries night and day. She wanted a woman of fortune and quality, and had Lady Betty Montagu in her eye, which would have been more discreet, but fate, I hope, designs them all happy with their mates.

Y^r truly affec.

S. O.

LETTER LIII

The Mr. Fox who married Lady Mary Fitzpatrick was Stephen (d. 1774), who succeeded his father (see p. 67) as 2^d Lord Holland; Charles James Fox was his younger brother.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



CHARLES STREET, 15 April 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—The good account you give of yourself both in body and spirits has had the same good effect on me as the fine climate you are in has had on you. Your brother would have wrote himself today, but that he is on guard, and also nothing material is on the anvil at present. The recess of Parliament during the Easter holidays has kept the town empty and quiet, and not a word of politics has transpired, only the grave-thinking men look upon them to have been fatally conducted.

No one is happy, as they foresee that without some miracle we are undone. This week the Parliament has met again. Yesterday was entertaining to those not concerned. Strange management, that a material point was to be the business of the day, but no Chancellor of the Exchequer there, or anyone of the Ministry to support it. Pitt went down to be quite against the question. Thomas Townshend and Onslow proposed it. I think it was an alteration in the malt tax. Pitt said he was entirely against these measures—it struck at the prerogative of the Crown—and totally disliked the whole, so much that they knocked under and said it was not a measure of government but a measure entirely of their own, which brought a laugh on them and on the Ministry, too, to find no head there, and the business to be carried on at the caprice of anyone who chose to start up and propose their own schemes. George Grenville was



there, but said not a word: left it to battle it among themselves, and all the sensible people laughing in their sleeves at such a material affair under such management.

Wednesday next a budget is to be opened: after that more may be said.

The young part of the town thinks of nothing but weddings. Duke Beaufort to Miss Boscawen, the Admiral's daughter. His mother so angry at the match, she would not see them till after the ceremony was over, and then just for them to receive her blessing, and stepped into their post chaise at Badminton.

Mr. Crew was also [a] few days after married to Miss Greville. They say she refused Fox. Most monstrous are the settlements he has made upon her, and Lady Mary Fitzpatrick has reconciled herself to take her leavings, and next week is to marry Fox. His father gives them £4,000 a year in present, and £10,000 at his death. A fine match for her. 'Tis a lucky year for the ladies without fortune.

The suitable match which pleases everybody is Lady Dorothy Cavendish, Duke Devonshire's sister, to the Duke of Portland, but it does not take place till August.

Lord Halifax came here next day after he received your letter. He looks well, and is now strong on his own footing.

We have had several wedding dinners—the first at Lord Guilford's, where were the three Earls and their three eldest sons. Lord Guilford, Lord North, Lord Sandwich (Lord Hinchinbroke not well, could not be there); therefore Lord Sandwich's youngest son, George Montagu, your brother, and myself. Tomorrow the same company at Lady Betty Archer's.

I have hardly left room to add your brother's affections with those, my dear Jack, of your most truly affec.

Gram^r.

LETTER LIV

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

*

[*The affair of Lord Forbes and Lady Georgiana Berkeley is treated abruptly in this letter, but not more so than the occasion warranted; the story is told with equal brevity by the lady's sister in her "Original Memoirs" (cf. Broadley and Melville, "The Beautiful Lady Craven"): "In the month of April . . . the guardians positively refused to give their consent to the match. Lord Forbes was a widower, and had a son by his first wife, Miss Bayley, aunt to the present Marquis of Anglesey. Lady Georgiana cried, and told Lady Berkeley she would never marry any other man; but Lady Berkeley informed her she would present her next week at Court; 'And then,' she added, 'so many men will be in love with you, that you will not think any more of him.' She was presented; and, to conclude the day, went off in the evening with Lord Forbes."*]

April 29, 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—I begin this large sheet in hopes your brother will fill it with more material subjects than my pen can afford, since even common chat deserts my house, now the charms of Ranelagh engages her votaries, and hurries all other amusements to give that a place in their time. The ladies at least will have reason to approve the way of life they are in, since all the matches are in their favor. Beauty overbalances cash, and all future considerations. Miss Bishop is the next, to a Mr. Dummer—a great estate and fine seat in Hampshire. . . .

An ugly report creeps about that Mr. Hervey and another English gentleman are lost by their curiosity leading them to Mount Vesuvius just as the eruption broke out: if so, you know it, therefore no more on that subject.



'Tis said the House will be up at Whitsuntide. Pitt is quite a harlequin: one day appears in one shape, the next quite contrary: roasts all sides; says there is not an honest man to counsel with; therefore will stand alone. The mongrel curs of the present times shrink and creep, and fall down at his footstool, watch his nod, and would show implicit obedience to his will, but he does as all great minds should do,—despises sycophants.

The division grown stronger, but what will come of it none can tell. Your cousin George Byng is so angry they will not go through thick and thin with one another that he almost resolves never to come in Parliament again. . . . I see nothing yet but doubt and despair. When the sun will shine again I know not. The learned say there is a spot on the sun bigger than this world, which perhaps is the reason of so many clouded understandings. This and the large comet employ the curious at Flamsteed's, Greenwich Park. Your friend Lord Forbes, when he left you at Brussels, went to one of the French provinces to learn the language, which he did to such perfection that he spent £8,000 when he came to Paris, and there fell in love with Lady Georgiana Berkeley. He is now in England in your brother's regiment, and she came over lately, and they renewed their former conversations, . . . and she is now Lady Forbes. His father so angry at this destructive match and his Paris extravagance, he vows to set him aside and give his estate to his grandson.

Your brother is now busy with field days, but has charged me with his best affections to you. You are always sure [of] those of yours sincerely,

S. O.

I believe few post days for fifty years past have escaped from my hand in the Post Office, so that I imagine it so well known there I can never disguise.

LETTER LV

13 May 1766

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



MY DEAR JACK,—I am extremely disappointed that no letter from you is come the very great distance between us is an unpleasant circumstance, but I will not enlarge on that subject, only hope it will establish your health. 'Tis as endless as uncertain to send you accounts of the situation of the present times, which varies every day. The Parliament sets till ten or twelve most nights. The mountain only produces a mouse, for all seems at a stand: nothing done, nothing pleasing to anyone.

Duke Grafton has certainly given warning, but is desired to remain till they can provide themselves with one to supply his place. I am weary and so is everybody at these uncertainties. Every creature is going out of town, most particularly all the men of business. It seems as if everything was left to be governed by chance and haphazard, and yet Parliament will not be up till June.

Torrington gone to find an agreeable hunting seat in Lincolnshire, Halifax settling his own affairs: has full employment in doing that. I hope he will retrieve his losses, and satisfy all concerned in them, and be a free man before he retakes those of a higher nature, for certainly sooner or later he will have office again.

I don't intend stirring out of town, but wait and watch for the pleasure of hearing from you,

being most affectionately yours

LETTER LVI

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



The Lally here alluded to was a French officer, Governor of Pondicherry, which he surrendered to the English; he was beheaded in France 1766. The circumstances of the case had some similarity with those of Admiral Byng's conviction.

CHARLES STREET, May 30, 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—This being my turn, I take it to say that however your mind is discomposed with your present situation, your brother and I bear an equal share with you, but we all three must make use of the senses and reason God has given us, and not sink under the unavoidable state of our present circumstances. While I live, which in all human probability cannot be long, you shall be supported, so make yourself easy. Duke Grafton is gone out without being able to serve his father-in-law, though greatly desirous to do it. Duke of Richmond is come in, more unfit than any, so that things grow worse and worse. Lord North has refused one of the Vice Treasurerships of Ireland, and none that have a grain of understanding will take any concerns upon them—no, not the ministers abroad. The other day Torrington asked a principal, who was to go to such a court? He answered, “You, if you please, for we don’t find those we wish for will accept.” In short, I must give you this comfort that ’tis a much greater disgrace to be in than out. The Parliament not yet up. They get together forty members, and pass what bills they please—no one knows or cares. Even the members who are in town don’t care to attend. Such a time I never remember.

No account has yet come of Lord Charles Montagu and

his fine wife being landed at his government of North Carolina. While they lived in St. James' Palace before they went, they lived well and had their dinner and wine from Thatched House: the bill for four months was £1,200.

You give us no account of Mount Vesuvius, tho' this eruption is often seen at Naples. . . . Pray give us news of this extraordinary matter.

Don't laugh when I tell you there has been one of our men of war sent from a part in the East Indies in search of an island which they had the fortune to find, and landed some of the crew to discover the sort of people upon it. They found them a strong robust people eight feet and [a] half high. A girl of thirteen was seven feet, and others in proportion. They were clothed with skins of beasts, and invited our people to go farther up the country, but they were satisfied with the discovery and returned. Part of this was in our newspapers. I concluded it a Gulliver island, and that it was a joke, but at Admiral Osborn's last night they confirmed the truth, and therefore I conclude it is so.

Lally's fate is compared to my poor brother's: two innocent men sacrificed to ministers' purposes. In an article from France, I see the comparison, and before that from private conversation.

Your brother's sincere affections are ever joined with mine to you. . . .

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER LVII

July 1st, 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—I set down to write to you with a mind as gloomy as the weather, which has been continually weeping for ten weeks past. The thundering and lightning



we have lately had has made me hope it would clear the clouds, and let us once more see the sun; however, these hopes are vain, and weeping still continues, to the sorrow of those who have large crops of hay all spoiling.

I must begin with the melancholy tale of your Aunt Jekyll's death. . . . I cannot think what can become of her daughter, poor girl, to whom she is an irreparable loss: to poor Miss Roberts her companion also, though she lived like a toad under a harrow. Lord Halifax was then at Horton, . . . but he went and stayed with her till she died . . . You must mourn three weeks, black sword and buckles; three weeks, colored ones with your mourning coat . . . Her violent temper was a misfortune, but who is without fault? Your brother is with Lord Halifax at Horton, returns next week to Chicksands. . . .

My dear Jack, what is it possible for us to do for you, when you consider the impropriety of a man in opposition asking a favor? . . . If you were here opportunities might offer and you would be known to people who could serve you, [but] they will not take a man in the clouds they know nothing of. Everyone knows, and the King too, why you quitted Brussels . . . When you can be served you certainly will, but while you are absent, believe me, nothing can be done for you.

Lord Halifax can do nothing, Lord North refuses all offers made him, none of the Outs think they can with honor accept, much less ask for any favors. So many things are vacant, and no acceptors: Treasury, Navy vacant, Vice-treasurership of Ireland, with several other things that is amazing goes begging.

I am your truly affect. . . .

LETTER LVIII

July 4, 1766

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



MY DEAR JACK,—Though I wrote a long letter last Tuesday, I set down to a fresh sheet of paper today. There is no one appointed to Vienna yet—no scheme subsists twenty-four hours. . . . I don't wonder you have no notion of these things, because it is entirely new. I have before told you of great offers to those who I hope will serve you, but he will not accept: sees it is with a halter round his neck.

His nephew North they would buy at any rate, but he will not be an apostate. How long this confused state of affairs may last no one can tell. Providence has often brought us from the brink of ruin; I therefore trust we shall still be saved.

Let me entreat you to turn your thoughts home You can live in credit like a gentleman on £320 or £340 a year. . . . By the time this reaches you, you will be twenty-three—not an age to be very miserable, though Fortune has been a jilt.

Y^r truly affect.

S. O.

LETTER LIX

The person mentioned by Sarah whose picture is at Chick-sands is certainly Oliver Cromwell. There is a portrait of him by Lely there.

Friday, 18 July 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—The very next post after I wrote, I could have told you the bustle was beginning, and things



come in earnest to a crisis. The wheels so clogged, Government was at a stop and pulled up dead short. The King sent for Pitt, and Pitt is come, and most certain has a *carte blanche*—on no other terms would he undertake—so he gets himself master of the position. Was heated with his journey, but saw the King next day, which was this day was sennight. All is conjecture: the only certain thing is that Pitt comes in, but in what place is not yet settled, only that he will carve for himself, and make up a ministry of those who will be guided by him. . . .

Mr. Pitt and Lord Temple have met, but so far from agreeing, they were very warm, and Mr. Pitt so ruffled by it that he has forbid anyone to come to him on business for two days, for his fever is much increased. How will he bear the ruffles of the whole kingdom on his shoulders? . . . But I own I am glad he is to be prime minister: 'twill quiet the nation and cool the minds of all dissatisfied, as well as strike terror abroad, where I doubt in our present situation we must be despised. 'Tis said the City intend to go in a body to thank the King the day after Pitt is appointed. Are you not staggered to find Prince Ferdinand has resigned all his employments to [the] King of Prussia, and 'tis affirmed has accepted of all Marshal Saxe's appointments in France? I dare not trust on paper what is said on that event here. In short, we talk much of the times when the person governed whose picture is over one of the doors of the blue room at Chicksands.

Your uncle (Lord Halifax) just stepped in here, and said . . . he will assist you all in his power, in anything but a direct request to the Ministry. . . .

I must now tell you a little chat. . . . Lady Mountrath is dead, [and] has left Lord John Cavendish £40,000: never saw him but once in her life—only because he was



a patriot—and some more patriot legacies to people she did not know. She was a Bradford, and maddish, and so she has lived and died; her son is the same; therefore all her riches of no value.

Pitt has the reversion of Lady Grandison's £9,000 a year, if young Villiers, her son, dies under age. He is inclined to be wild, and has not had the small pox, and Pitt is lucky. Therefore everyone concludes the boy is to die. Lord William Campbell was appointed to the government of Nova Scotia in the room of your cousin, Colonel Wilmot.

Adieu, my dear Jack,
believe me affectionately yours

LETTER LX

August 1st, 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—I must acquaint you last Wednesday kissed hands:

Pitt, now Earl of Chatham—Lord Privy Seal.

Lord Northington—Lord President.

Lord Camden—Lord Chancellor.

Lord Shelburne—Secretary of State.

Conway remains the other.

Duke of Grafton—1st Lord of the Treasury.

Charles Townshend—Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Stanley—Ambassador to Russia.

Mr. Campbell—A Lord of Treasury.

The above are certain. Dowdeswell is to be provided for: some say Speaker, some say Joint Paymaster with James Grenville. . . . Lord Dartmouth has resigned, [and] is Lord of Trade; Duke of Newcastle has refused a pension



of £4,000 a year. People are not pleased. Pitt will lose popularity by losing his name. Sir James Porter went to Lord Chatham [and the] Duke of Grafton, to make his ceremonial visits to them: none at home

Believe me ever affectionately yours

LETTER LXI

12 August 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—I am much distressed what to say in this letter, since, tho' a change is accomplished, we are no better. No longer Pitt but Earl of Chatham: this was the fall of the popular Pulteney when Earl of Bath. All the joy and expectations of our great patriots—and indeed the whole nation—seems quite damp, for he has not taken the leading place—is only Privy Seal, and now out of the House of Commons, where all the business must lie. However, he has made Charles Townshend Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is to lead, and who has undoubted abilities, but there you must stop. It is understood that Chatham is to guide the whole, and be absolutely supreme. The manner as well as the fact of discarding those turned out of the late Ministry has disobliged them: Rockingham extremely so. Our old friends go by the title of Bedford faction. Pitt and Temple quite at variance: pamphlets, epigrams, odes, and more wit flying about than for some years past. . . . Letters are wrote that the King wants men of abilities, and those who are possessed of them are expected to serve him in the capacities they are most able for. Lord Granby, Commander in Chief of the army; Stanley goes to Russia, Ellis to Spain. He was very far from a friend to your uncle.

Your brother came to London to mount guard on Sun-

day. I am sure his fortune cannot support opposition to Ongley, but he acts by Lord Halifax's advice. . . . Many talk of resigning; many want to do so, but won't, it is reckoned: I know not if true. Quite a bureau affair. Can it be possible such oil and vinegar could incorporate? 'Tis said, and by pamphlets proved, Bute and Pitt are so. Some think this cannot hold. Poor England, what will become of her? . . .

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER LXII

15 August 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Except you was on the spot, you can form no idea of our fluctuating situation. The like, I believe, is without example since the time of Charles I. Mr. Pitt, who was the idol, and by whose influence so many favored schemes were applauded last winter, by only his name to give them sanction, is now tore to pieces by all sides: that name is sunk, and they are violent against Lord Chatham: his friends aghast, his foes triumphant. You never answer, if our newspapers and pamphlets are ever seen at Naples.

Things are far from settled yet. Duke Grafton, First Lord Treasurer; Shelburne and Conway, Secretaries of State: since these are fixed there are resignations and dismissions every day. John Yorke and Charles Saunders resigned Admiralty last week, and this week Lord Egmont; so there [is] hardly a Board for business. . . . All this instability is very unfortunate for Government. I can only add that if Mr. Pitt can surmount the prejudices taken against Lord Chatham, and be steady in his guidance, which is absolutely fixed in himself alone, and be more than human



by blunting all his feelings to this clamor against him, things may by his perseverance stand on former ground; but if not, things will grow too powerful for any guidance, and throw us into I know not what, nor dare I think of a name for it. I am in hopes he will lay aside prejudice of party feuds, by taking in those of the best abilities on all sides. . . . All people displeased; don't trust the Cabinet. . . . *August* 19.—We are a strange disconcerted people—no one cares to accept Admiralty.

LETTER LXIII

CHARLES STREET, Friday, September 5, 1766

I here enclose the ode you desired me, by Mrs. Greville, but I hope you won't implore Oberon, for Pope says the passions are the elements of life: without them the blood would stagnate. Sherbet is the beverage of mortals, and to omit any one of the ingredients would render it insipid and tasteless. Sir George Pocock is vastly unhinged at his wife's illness: he sees and knows her danger, but must keep up spirits with her. What avails all the treasures of the East and West Indies poured into their laps? It will bring no happiness. . . .

Everything in this country without stability: no one at present so happy in it as Lord Bristol and Hervey. If I have any judgment, next winter will be a crisis. I saw Lord Stormont yesterday: he goes to Vienna next month. The clamors are as much against Pitt as they were in regard to [his] predecessors, and yet I hope he will hold it. Fifteen admirals was disobliged at Saunders being put at the head of the Admiralty. 'Tis thought [it] can only mean a step for Keppel to rise into that seat: in short, disobligations are



numerous, and consequently clamors. Lord Bristol is appointed to Ireland, and is to reside there constantly. The King desired to appoint the Secretary, whom he told him was his brother Augustus—£3,000 a year.

Lord Hertford is Master of the Horse. Duke of Rutland satisfied with Lord Granby being Commander in Chief. 'Tis in vain to send you a red book, unless one was printed every month.

I am in hopes you will come back with Sir George Pocock, but this is man's appointment: God may disappoint the whole.

LETTER LXIV

LONDON, 17 September 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Everything continues amazingly uncertain. I don't think Townshend or North will continue. God knows when our cards will be trumps again. They talk of the Bedford party coming in. Lord Weymouth Cofferer instead of Lord Scarborough. Parliament certainly is to meet beginning of November: the proclamation is already out for its doing so. Sir George Pocock thinks himself ill-used Before he set out for Naples, he kissed hands on leave, and then had an audience, and expressed his resentment at having had no reward for forty-five years' services—had been promised a peerage, and even that forgot.

Sir Thomas Alston intends to declare for our county, and as he is very flighty, impossible he can make anything of it; yet I think it will put your brother in a cleft stick. Lord Barrymore next month, when he is of age, to marry Lady Amelia Stanhope, Lord Harrington's third daughter.



Lord Mountstewart not yet married to Miss Windsor. 6 October Admiral Keppel is to convoy our Princess Caroline, the Queen of Denmark, to the Hague; from thence she is to have a miserable journey through Westphalia and cross the sea to Denmark.

LETTER LXV

Tuesday, 23 Sept. 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Believe me you cannot judge of affairs at the distance you are from us It has really given me infinite disquiet to find you fix your mind [on] castles in the air. . . . Was you here, you would see things in a different light. The system of government, families and connections are all moved by new springs If you knew the squabbles and difficulties they had to struggle with in the times that you think so hardly on, when they felt the ground they stood on was a bog, you would not judge as you do.

I have enquired how to get the protest. I find a peer may ask a copy, but as none are in town that I know, it will not be possible yet a while. There is a rumor as if some sort of coalition would take place before the Parliament meet in November: they talk of Lord Gower, Rigby, and Lord Weymouth, who are all the Bedford friends. This will be a curious winter. Though I am seventy-three, I have never seen anything like it.

Lord and Lady Hinchinbroke dined with me yesterday. All your relations are married, and will have children and grandchildren before you come home. I shall wish to live till May, that I may once more see you, being, my dear Jack, most affectionately yours

LETTER LXVI

[*The Princess Royal of this letter was Charlotte Augusta (1766-1828), later Queen of Württemberg. Princess Matilda was Caroline Matilda (called by her first name in Letter LXIV), posthumous daughter of Frederick, Prince of Wales (who never reached the throne), and sister to George III. Her marriage was unhappy, and her intrigue with a Dr. Struensee in the Danish court produced her ruin and his death, in 1772.*

Prince Henry Frederick, brother to Caroline Matilda and the King, was made Duke of Cumberland at his majority, his uncle who had borne the title (the hero of Culloden, see p. 62) having died in 1765.]

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LONDON, Oct. 7, 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Being *chargé d'affaires* is the most desirable thing in your situation, and will give you credit and reputation to have been so at two courts.

I fear I have seemed to write a little cross in my two or three last letters; if I did so it was occasioned by your writing your intermediate thoughts. . . .

Several are drawing off—profess they will link to no party. The borough of Oxford is given to Lord Hertford for his services in London. This is an unprecedented note above a pension, for it is for ever. Lord Northumberland is made a duke. No happy faces anywhere. It used to be, those out pout, and those in grin, but out or in all is pout We must be the ridicule of all foreign courts.

Our Princess Matilda was married by proxy last Wednesday, and Thursday morning set out for Harwich and so in the yacht to Holland, and so to her King at Copen-



hagen. The Queen is happy with her Princess Royal. Prince Henry is created Duke of Cumberland.

Lord Halifax to shoot, and enjoy the sweets of the life of a country gentleman. Since I wrote my other sheet, I must inform you Sir James Gray is appointed for Spain, and Lord Cardross, Lord Buchan's eldest son, is appointed Secretary to the Embassy; therefore all that view is lost.

Your truly affectionate Gra.

LETTER LXVII

14 October 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—Had you been here possibly we might have got you to Paris as volunteer with Lord Rochford. . . . Lord Grantham has given up the Post Office. They talk of Rigby for it. I suppose that is to soothe the Bedford party. Marquises in number to be made. Lord Chatham is now our whole governor: I wish he may work miracles, but all this placing and displacing shows, I think, a timidity. There is no party: everything is blended together; no connections, for they tie and untie every day as convenience and advantage offer. Honor and faith and friendship may be scratched out of the dictionary, for they are all words without meanings. In short, my dear Jack, I will not think, for 'tis in vain. Everything here is pursuing a shadow: all is delusion. I hope, however, that I shall keep an old fashion heart, and remain most truly your affectionate . . .

LETTER LXVIII

28 October 1766

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



MY DEAR JACK,—I sent your last letter to your brother at Chicksands, but he is rambling about to Newnham and Greatworth, and Lord Halifax is rambling, too. There can be no expectation of anything this winter by his interest. Petitions, peerages, places are lavishly given, all to prevent the Rockingham and Bedford [factions] joining. They will be powerful indeed if it cannot be prevented, and the present conductors must be overturned. Be careful and cautious of the Hollands and Foxes, and don't let a word transpire to them of what your letters say. Caution Hamilton also. Duke of Buccleugh's brother is dead of a fever at Paris, greatly lamented: they say much superior to his brother. You knew him.

This day fortnight Parliament is to meet.

No mortal yet come to town.

Nov^r 4th Your Sir James Porter has had all his family inoculated, and all is well and over. Mr. Villiers, Lord Grandison's son, was inoculated from the subject taken from them, but not yet come out. . . .

The month of May will, I hope, turn all things to suit the pleasures that spring should produce. One year goeth and another cometh, with every change to hurt, not only individuals, but the whole.

We have a very uncomfortable prospect: the poor murmuring and rising in all parts; provisions at so exorbitant a rate, they must starve except the Parliament can find means to prevent forestallers who monopolize all things that ought to have been in common to the people. Your brother has only had power to make his tenants cry, but not to make



them sell their grain at a reasonable price. They keep their barns full, in hopes by the scarcity to sell it at an immoderate rate, and indeed they deserve it. The mob, or by what other name they will be called, will level all to the ground, and there will be neither barns or grain left. They have been very desperate in many counties, and have reason, tho' these riotous proceedings must be suppressed if possible. Liberty is gone to too great a length. Adieu. . . .

LETTER LXIX

5 December 1766

MY DEAR JACK,—We have moved every spring we could for you I got a proper friend to recommend you to our great Commander, in the shape of Admiral Byng's nephew. . . . Lord Ossory is chiefly where hunting and horses can be his diversions; does not seem to care to be a senator yet. I fancy his turn is not very agreeable to his uncle. . . . Our two new brides, Duchess Portland and Lady Mountstewart, have exceeding brilliant equipages: the whole conversation is at present on that subject. They were both presented at Court last week. White coaches—or rather a *petit gris* color—silk reins and toppings, cut a most glaring and spreaded appearance. The ladies may look happy, but I see no man that looks so.

'Tis feared General Stanwix and his family are lost coming from Ireland a month since, and have not been heard of.

Whether prerogative, liberty, or aristocracy is to be the thing this winter who can tell? Some shape surely must be found. If I had no children, I should not care a fig, but as it is otherways I am not so easy.



No time or reign has ever produced events like the present. Surely some malignant star influences our conduct. All is helter skelter: sense and reason is fled to other climes. Keppel not only resigned Admiralty, but Bedchamber. On this break the Bedfords were sought. The Duke said he would come up and negotiate himself—would not transact through seconds; but before he arrived, Sir Edward Hawk, Sir Percy Bret, and Jenkinson were appointed to the Admiralty. He thought this so great a slight, he broke all off, and returned to Woburn, and will, I conclude, be bitterer than ever. Delawar, Master [of the] Horse—everyone gaping for this extraordinary place. Tell Sir George Pocock of all these outs and ins, but be cautious—no one knows who is who. 'This day to be a great one (5 Decr) in the House of Commons. Your brother will write next post. 'Tis in regard to the dispensing power, an exact parallel to the general warrants, only they change sides.

Believe me, dear Jack, in all your situations, I shall be most faithfully yours

LETTER LXX

CHARLES STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE,

January 2nd, 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—My best wishes have, I hope, reached you in time for the New Year, and I repeat them again. Several mournings also present themselves to you, not only your Aunt Margaret Osborn, but poor Lady Guilford: you must mourn for six weeks. Commissioner Osborn also is in grief for his only son, George. He was a puny boy, and



not like to have spirit for this world, but a parent feels the affliction, and cannot alleviate by such reflections. Whenever you return you will find death has made a sweep among your family and friends. The Commissioner and Admiral are very tottering, and seem almost ready to obey his call. I say nothing of one more near.

Lady Guilford has disappointed many expectations by making her will entirely in Lord Guilford's favor. Lord Bolingbroke choosing to spend all at Arthur's and Newmarket, [this] was no essential loss to him, since all would have gone there, and being parted from his wife, no prospect of his children proving better than their parents. . . . The estate was reckoned £4,000 a year; this is lucky for Lord North. . . . Lord Cornwallis is made Justice in Eyre—£2,000 a year. He is with his regiment at Minorca. The last letter from him said he intended to spend Carnival in Italy, and not come home till spring, but this employ is given to him unsolicited. . . . Every step of these times are astonishing; seems as if caprice had a share At present hope is all we live on. Adieu. . . .

LETTER LXXI

CHARLES STREET, 13 January 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—It is an uncommon expression of affection to say I rejoice at your being at Naples, for England this winter is Muscovy: so severe a climate has not been here since the year 1740. Intense cold, and snow so deep no communication of roads, [so] that even the post is [a] day beyond the usual time, and the streets in London almost impassable. What must poor wretches suffer who can have neither victuals, clothes, or work to procure them any, when

even those who enjoy the blessing of comforts, so hardly endure it?

The turn of times here is too unaccountable to be credited At present both England and Ireland are under Chatham's thumb. A secret spring may guide the motions, but the ways are unsearchable, and past finding out.

Lord Bristol says publicly he shall not move in Ireland but under the direction of Lord Chatham.

Lord Barrymore's day was fixed for Lady Amelia Stanhope, the dinner prepared at Lord Harrington's, the bride dressed, when behold the messenger with letter acquainted him Lord Barrymore was taken ill, and his physician advised him to put off the wedding. He has been ill ever since. Some believe it, others don't, and think he repents.

Your uncle Lord Halifax is in grief: has lost his only son George.

My dear Jack, may health and prosperity attend you.

Your truly affect.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER LXXII

Tuesday, February 10, 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—It is just a month since I wrote to you, when I was taken ill in the middle of writing that letter; however, I finished it in my bed before the post went out. From that time I had Sir Clifton Wintringham seventeen days twice a day. I have still relapses, but while bleeding relieves, here I shall be. At seventy-three how long, God alone knows. Your brother was sent for and came all night in that dreadful snow. I am perfectly resigned to the will of Heaven, for I consider myself of no use to either of you.



Feb. 20.—I hear Miss Bowes is married this day to Lord Strathmore. The two brides who make the principal conversation at present are Mr. George Pitt's daughter, bred in convent at Sens, from which Mr. Legonier fetched her. At present her dress is the wonder of the town: her head a yard high, and filled, or rather covered, with feathers to an enormous size, fitter for a masquerade than a drawing-room. The other is Lady Guidon, who was Miss Wilmot. Her head-dress is as high, but is built up like a rock with diamonds, and indeed she is so much covered with jewels, that they compare her to a lark wrapped up in crumbs. Lord Chatham is again detained at Marlborough; the whole machine of government therefore stands still. Parliament meets on pretence of business, but postpones it to a future day.

Your brother desires me to say he will write as soon as our great Director comes to put the wheels in motion. At present there is no spirit but what newspapers spit forth, for things are grown too serious to bear a joke. I may totter on for some time: tho' altered in person, yet never can in my affection for you, while I crawl on this earth and am able to tell you so. Adieu. . . .

LETTER LXIII

LONDON, March 6, 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—I can now assure you I am better, though I must not expect a return of strength at my time of day that cannot be recruited. Lord Halifax, his son and daughter, dined here last Saturday, but I was not able to go down to dinner. The Ministry lost the question by eighteen last Friday, and they did not endeavor to battle it or divide the House on the report next day. Most people are pleased



that the third land tax is gained by the opposition. Lord North from being in office must use his brightest talents, but was left in the lurch by Charles Townshend, whom he was to support, and who soon gave up the point himself. Shelburne was dispatched next morning to Marlborough, where our principal and indeed *sole guide* has been laid up with the gout at an inn: 'twas said so bad, he could neither return or come forward, but Shelburne's intelligence of defeat electrified him, and into his coach he got immediately, away to London, and to the King, and 'tis now said a defeat is of no consequence, and that 'tis all right. New ways of thinking transpire every day.

Duke of Buccleugh is very soon to marry Lady Betty Montagu's daughter. Lady Dalkeith, his mother, so happy with the match she could not sleep for three nights after it was settled. Last Saturday Harriot Bladen was married to Lord Essex. Poor Lady Amelia Stanhope must see many more matches concluded before her own, for Lord Barrymore is obliged to submit to a salivation, which he is now in, before he can be a bridegroom. Almack's, Soho, concerts, burlettas and operas engages all the idle people every night, which makes such invalids as myself much alone. Parties at cards and assemblies take all their turn, so that the hours and days are much too short for all that must be done, and we are now in the height of our diversions.

My dear Jack, I am yours with very tender affection.
Adieu.

LETTER LXXIV

March 17, 1767, LONDON

MY DEAR JACK,—By this time I conclude it is time to find you at Rome. There is nothing here but confusion:



every department a rope of sand. I believe history does not afford the like: every party, every connection broke to pieces. Sir James Grey not gone yet. He labored much against any secretary to the embassy being appointed: said they were of no use and that it would be a great saving to Government to strike off that expense. They have not regarded his economy, and today I hear a younger brother of Lord Walpole's is to be appointed Here is almost Lady Day and nothing done. All the chiefs have their several convenient maladies, one or two the gout, [so] that by one impediment or other all business is postponed: no budget yet opened, no plan of supply. One day Charles Townshend was on the point to resign: he had slunk away into the city and could not be found, but no one would accept his place; therefore all met again, shook hands, and [were] friends. All this must appear to you to be children's play.

Lord Tavistock's accident is a miserable affair. This day sennight at the Redborn Hunt of near fifty gentlemen, his horse in a leap came too short over and fell, throwed Lord Tavistock off, who catching at [the] bridle, made the horse plunge, and struck both stomach and head, and fractured his skull. He was taken up speechless, and carried to a farm house where he still is, his life or death yet uncertain. Gataker was sent immediately. The horse had trepanned him, and therefore Gataker had only to take out the splintered bones and pieces of skull. The chance is yet against him, as you may guess from the situation he is in: sometimes favorable accounts, at other despairing ones. There is a large afflicted family, and indeed the whole town lamenting the unfortunate case. There are two sons, but what a blow to the tender passions of his parents and wife, as well as the pride and ambition of his father, and indeed a loss to our county.

Your brother's love attends you, with that of your truly affect. Gra.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN

LETTER LXXV

Tuesday, 22 March 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—Tho' they began polling at Northampton last Thursday, yet there is not a probability of it being over under four or five days. Therefore [I] postpone all things relating to that expensive and troublesome affair till the end of this letter, in hopes there may be a final determination of it before I seal it. . . . We are now in the midst of faction and riot. Wilkes has daringly stepped forth with an audacious attempt to stand for the city, and tho' he is an outlaw, bids defiance to Government. . . . I hope he has no chance of being chose a city member, tho' yesterday a coach with six horses was ready to take him off the hustings to the place of dinner, and when half way they took out the horses, and carried his coach themselves—strange infatuation! But all this is mob. . . . 'Tis said two millions will be spent in elections; £20,000 and £30,000 comes out of every purse. Nabobs, contractors, silversmiths, bankrupts, are in high luck: there will hardly be two hundred real gentlemen in the House. The landed interest died with the last parliament. . . . Adieu. Affect. yours. . . .

LETTER LXXVI

CHARLES STREET, BERKELEY SQUARE,

Tuesday, 24 March 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—My last, wrote to you this day sen-
night to Rome, had the particular and dismal account of



poor Lord Tavistock's accident. By that you could entertain no hope of a favorable one in my next; therefore [he] not surprised when I tell you he languished under many severe operations till yesterday morning, when at 4 o'clock he died. The faculty never had the least hope of his recovery, tho' [they] gave flattering ones to the Duke of Bedford, and therefore the thunderbolt has almost demolished him. You know his passions are strong, and he is almost distracted. Poor Lady Tavistock, who never was permitted to see him, tho' [she] went to a house within a quarter of a mile [of] where he lay, but the agitation of seeing her was not to be ventured—she was brought to town yesterday neither dead nor alive: has been in fits ever since, and greatly to be pitied, for they were very happy. She has two boys, and in time I hope will take comfort in them as I have done in mine. My loss was a Tavistock to me, and therefore I feel greatly for the whole family.

Your brother by advice of his friends has wrote circular letters. It was agreed by all that he stood pledged to the county by his application last summer, and therefore his offer now could not be avoided. . . . There must immediately be a meeting appointed, and he must then judge his strength. Lord Tavistock is an irreparable loss to our county. There will not be a proper head to it left when Duke Bedford dies. This must shorten his days, and damp all ambitions. He is now extremely ill. You cannot conceive how all people from the King to the laborers lament for Lord Tavistock; there never was greater grief. Ossory is so shy in the country that no one there takes to him, but how far the tenderness of people's hearts may move them to indulge the Duke of Bedford in the person of his nephew, a little time will show otherways. Alston, who has great interest, intends going down to the meeting and supports your brother with all his

power. 'Twill appear a bold stroke for a private gentleman, to bring an opposition against so powerful a person, and two such powerful purses: it sounds running his head against a brick wall. Pray God send him well out of this scrape. . . .

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER LXXVII

[*"The poor Dungarvan" of this letter was Viscount Dungarvan, first child of the 7th Earl of Cork and his wife Anne Courtenay; he was two at this time, and fortunately died just a year later. The Earl's sister Lucy had in 1765 married the 4th Viscount Torrington (a union referred to on p. 96), so that Mrs. Osborn's interest is that of a family connection.*]

LONDON, 31 March 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—I fret a little to find after next quarter your income will decrease, since I conclude you will think it right to resign your studentship by that time. . . . This has been a trying winter for old and young. Death has made great havoc and caused much grief in many families: that of the Bedfords exceeds all the rest.

Lady Cork has such continual hysteric fits that it has showed the shocking effects on the poor Dungarvan, who is quite an idiot. Duke of Manchester must seek another country: the house in this square to be sold, the castle in the country to be let, but who is there can take it? He has not paid a tradesman since his father died.

At present I am wore down: lie upon the first floor, not able to go up or down. We have a long, severe winter which continues still, tho' tomorrow is April. The chance is against me—seventy-odd weighs very heavy in the scale—but when—



ever it happens I shall die in the assurance that you two brothers will preserve an inviolable friendship for each other as long as you live.

The Hinchinbros say they cannot live on £2,000 a year rent charge, which is as good as £2,500 estate. They talk of retiring into the country. There surely is some influence over this island: no one is happy or settled. . . . Your brother is gone into Beds to try his strength at the election. I think he has no chance, for all the great and principal personages are so softened by the Duke's affliction that they are tender of adding to the disturbance of his mind, and therefore most likely your friend Ossory will find an easy seat.

I am most truly yr affectionate

LETTER LXXVIII

April 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—I have opened your brother's letter to tell you . . . that when the writ was read by the Sheriff at the meeting, your brother made his speech to say he looked upon himself pledged to the county, . . . but as the gentlemen were inclined to pay a tribute of regard to their late worthy member (Lord Tavistock) by choosing his relation, he very readily joined with them in it . . . Everybody is undone in England; every day produces new distresses; the immense expense of the hunting gentlemen makes horses and hounds a drug that must be sold; an infatuation runs through the whole plan of living; and, instead of being happy, everyone has made themselves miserable and must all transport themselves to America. Lord Chatham is, they say, too ill for business; sees no mortal except Lord Bristol;



sends back unopened all letters from the Ministers; but yet holds the helm, which is a most distressing situation for us. Charles Townshend opened his budget yesterday and by a most able speech adjourned the house for ten days, and sent all parties home in good humor. There is, however, all material business left undone. India Company affairs is the great object to settle, and in that Townshend does not draw with Lord Chatham; therefore he will not see him, nor either of the Secretaries of State, and nothing conclusive can pass without his sanction. For my own part I conclude he will fling up, and say he cannot guide. Bedford has surprised all the House of Lords, for being as composed and seemingly as well as ever. He spoke well and warm. A charming monody on poor Tavistock—'tis said by Emely, who was his tutor.

Your acquaintance Lord Anglesey is the present town talk. He was at Lord Lyttelton's last year, and there [he] made love to his daughter, who is of a romantic turn; therefore took all his oddities for wit, and liked him much. The father did not disapprove; however, a month ago he danced at Almack's with Lady Frances Howard, and made love and proposed to her. After a thousand ridiculous things, impossible to relate, he went again to Miss Lyttelton, and then to Lord Carlisle to say he was engaged to Lyttelton, but his heart and love was to Lady Frances. This all came to be too serious to pursue. Lord Carlisle, her brother, challenged him. He only answered he had done his family too much injury to add to it and asked pardon. He went to Sir Richard Lyttelton for advice, who told him he ought to go home and be blooded, and never show his face more. 'Tis said he is gone abroad.

Lord Barrymore, who was the whole conversation of last January, is married to Lady Amelia Stanhope. These have



been two [of] the most remarkable adventures of this age. Duke Manchester's house is sold to Child the banker for 10,000 guineas.

My dear Jack, adieu. Most affectionately yours. . . .

LETTER LXXIX

[*The "Lord Anglesey" referred to in these letters was Arthur Annesley, Viscount Valentia and Earl of Mountnorris, son of Richard, Sixth Earl of Anglesey. This sixth Earl, who died in 1761, is notorious as having (ca. 1727) procured the kidnapping and bondage in America of his nephew, James Annesley, rightful Lord Altham; according to Burke, he made three marriages, but they were so haphazard that at his death two women claimed for their sons the Irish titles of Valentia and Mountnorris. Julia Donovan won her case, and her son Arthur succeeded. He was, however, never able to substantiate his claim to his father's English earldom of Anglesey.*]

LONDON, May 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—I hope it will be agreeable to you to hurry home as fast as you can, not that there is a certainty of an immediate prospect here, but as the confusion thickens, a convulsion of some sort must be the consequence. . . . Therefore haste away and try to find solidity, judgment, and sincerity in England, where you will also be sure to find true affection and regard. I conclude the intention of your tour through Italy is to survey the southern courts, that you may judge of them in future time, for merely travelling must be attended with too much expense where there is no foundation for it.



I am afraid you will find everybody sour. There is not a happy face. Various causes for it: debt and politics are chief ones.

Lord Anglesey is married to Miss Lyttelton—a happy pair, no doubt.

Our Parliament, both Lords and Commons, sits late, and many long days there have been lately. Neither India or American affairs more settled than a month past. The two Irish peers, Barrymore and Anglesey, walk with their countesses arm in arm at Ranelagh every night. I believe people are rather cautious of being forward in their acquaintance.

We have still fires, and still must call it winter. I hope you will bring summer with you.

Your truly affect. . . .

LETTER LXXX

CHARLES STREET, 24 July 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—Your last letter from Pisa left me hopes that a longer time there would establish your health. . . . Should any remains of your complaint be still left, our baths at Bath will be as salutary as those you have left. This day great thunder and lightning: I hope it will clear the air, which has been very close and unhealthy some time past. Agues and fevers never known so much in London: everybody in some degree or other from the King [and] Lord Chatham, to the servants of every house. London is [so] greatly improved since you left it that you will not believe it the same city. The pavement is amazing, and the lights in the squares and streets so, too. If you meet with English papers, you must not depend on anything you read in them: nothing is done, but a great deal doing.

Your truly affect. . . .

LETTER LXXXI

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



CHARLES STREET, 8 September 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—I thank you for your letter from Lucca. I am glad you have received benefit from the baths of Pisa. . . . We have had an irreparable loss in the death of Mr. Charles Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who died last Friday evening, greatly lamented by all people: without dispute the most able, the most knowing, the most eloquent man in the kingdom—was an acquisition to any party that had him. His wit got the preference of his prudence, therefore rather unsteady; but upon the whole he was a most amiable man in all the relations of life. The public have a loss, but his mother and brother have a much greater, never to be repaired; must be sensibly felt by them to their last moments. A putrid fever has leveled him now with other mortals.

Lord Bute's second son Wortley, who is to enjoy all the Wortley riches, has married himself from the University of Edinburgh to a Miss Cunningham; the Duke of Gordon, to a Miss Maxwell: both lucky Scotch ladies.

Poor Doctor Gregory is going—a fever and dropsy—on the decline, as is your truly affect. . . .

LETTER LXXXII

The Northampton election spoken of in this letter came off in 1768, and is known by the name of the "Spendthrift Election." Lord Spencer is said to have spent £150,000 on the contest, and Lords Northampton and Halifax £100,000.

September 29, 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—Venice is a terrible place: very unlucky your fate led you there. That damp air much more prejudicial than English. . . . Great contests at all elections, and England must be for a twelvemonth to come a most disagreeable place. Your uncle, Lord Halifax, was well attended by all his family at Northampton races. Lord Northampton and Lord Halifax met there on extreme good terms, and were to settle the members for the general elections. They were to nominate them at this meeting. Lord Northampton named his brother-in-law, Sir George Rodney, and Lord Halifax his nephew, Sir George Osborn; therefore your brother is now in full employ, feasting and canvassing. . . . For several years these two families have brought in by compromise each one member, so there is no contest, and the expense a trifle in comparison of what others are: perhaps four or five thousand pounds. Sir Robert Barnard says he has £45,000 in his banker's hands, and will spend it all in opposition to Hinchinbroke and Carisfort for County Huntingdon. Duke of Portland engages against Sir James Lowther. Carlisle, Cumberland, and all the north are in flames by these potent interests clashing. Lord Edward Bentinck is sure to come in somewhere: golden showers water his cause.

Lord Palmerston met Miss Pool at Spa. Those waters produce many amours; and though ten years older than himself, [she] is agreeable, sensible, and so clever, that notwithstanding his intentions of marrying a fortune—and she has none—yet love prevailed, and he was married to her last week.

Lord and Lady North dined with me the day before they went out of town. As he would be a great man soon, I be-

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN





gan my solicitations before he was so, and put in my claim with regard to you.

Sunday last Wrottesley came express with the death of the Duke of York: there was, before that, accounts come of his dangerous illness. Perhaps we don't know truth, but they call it a putrid fever, occasioned by his dancing in violent hurries. . . . I have a terrible opinion of all the physicians abroad: they are absolute quacks. They are a pert society, and all those abroad are [so] full of the condition of the English that it is miserable to fall into their hands. Molière well has described them: [he] sets them forth in their true colors, and shows what a state of body and mind they reduce their friends to.

Your affectionate

LETTER LXXXIII

CHARLES STREET, 16 October 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—It was your brother's turn to have wrote now, but the opposition of Sir James Langham finds him full employment, and he obliged to scamper away to Northampton this morning. This foolish affair will occasion the two Earls to draw their purses. £800 to each already—a very vexatious circumstance—but your uncle is determined to go through it at all events, and as they remain 600 ahead of Sir James, there seems no doubt it must and will end well.

All this week has been full of surprises. The sun has shone most gloriously into this room. . . . George Montagu is appointed secretary to the Chancellor of Exchequer. Lord North has kissed hands for that. . . .

In reading Lord Lyttelton's *Harry 2nd*, a passage struck



me of a letter from good Theobald, old Archbishop of Canterbury, to him, who was the immediate predecessor of Becket. "My flesh is consumed, and my soul is on the point of departing from my body, but it still lingers in hope and desire of your coming. It will not suffer mine eyes to close till they have had the satisfaction of beholding your face." But he died before King Harry returned to England, who was then in France.

My dear Jack, most affectionately yours

LETTER LXXXIV

LONDON, 27 October 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—The delightful weather we now have makes me wish you were here. The *Montreal* is not yet arrived with Duke of York's remains, but expected every day *Nov^r 3^d*. The contest at Northampton runs high, and the Spencer interest broke faith several times. Sir James Langham has, however, given up; [he] used Lord Spencer very ill.

Yesterday morning the Queen gave birth to a fourth son. The day was strangely divided by joy in the morning and grief in the evening, when the Duke of York's remains were brought from Greenwich to the Jerusalem Chamber, and are to be interred in Westminster Abbey this evening. I conclude grief has took its seat at your court, at the unexpected death of the Archduchess Josepha. Never were such stormy contests as now.

Yours affectionately

THE SOUTH-EAST VIEW OF CHICKSAND-PRIORY, IN THE COUNTY OF BEDFORD.



THIS Priory was founded in the Reign of H. R. I. by Rensie Wife of Ecgarnus de Rauchamp Baron of Bedford for Nuns of the Order of S. Gilbert of Sempringham & dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. This Ecgarnus & his Wife gave divers Lands & Privileges to this House, which were confirmed by H. E. II. who in the 10 Year of his Reign granted Licence to John Blundel to build y^e Manor of Chicksand wth all its Appurtenances on this Convent.

14. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

LETTER LXXXV

LONDON, 20 November 1767

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



MY DEAR JACK,—I am but the shadow of the Grandmother you left in England, and cannot go out of my house, and I find such delay and indolence in everybody that 'tis very hard and difficult to obtain any answer. . . . I find the Archduchess is likely to recover [from] the smallpox, and conclude she will be your Queen; [she is] therefore likely to be with you in the summer, for all preparations for the other will serve for this, the name only changed.

God knows how politics are to end. At present [it] is quiet, but the oppositions and money spent by candidates for the new parliament has been unknown before. Your brother and Sir George Rodney are obliged to live at Northampton

Sir George Pocock looks pretty well. He was summoned to Cockpit, Lord Torrington to Duke Grafton's, to hear [the] King's speech, but neither could attend. Lord Bolingbroke's cause is begun. 'Tis thought her lord will not be able to procure a divorce. The town will be very empty this winter, every soul canvassing in the country. I shall rejoice when Parliament is dissolved, and writs issued for the new one. Adieu

LETTER LXXXVI

Nov. 25, 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—Your brother has told you all about Northampton, which principally fills our thoughts There is not the least doubt but he will have success 'Tis infinite the trouble he has, and must for some months



have the same. 'Tis rather stubborn and obstinate in Lord Spencer to set up Lord Howe. . . . Parliament met on Tuesday last: all pretty quiet. Some attempts to amendment of the address, but it soon subsided. One or two flamed away about present mismanagement, but as usual ended in nothing. The landed interest is beat out, and merchants, nabobs, and those who have gathered riches from the East and West Indies stand the best chance of governing this country.

Sums unheard of are now given for Cornish boroughs. George Byng gives £3,000 for one he is obliged to bring in, and £4,000 has since been offered for it by another, tho' in honor the person must keep to his first purchaser.

LETTER LXXXVII

CHARLES STREET, Xmas Day, 1767

MY DEAR JACK,—The season, the day, and my inclinations all press my best wishes to be sent by my pen. Lord Halifax has received Mr. Hamilton's letter. . . . I wish you had taken the resolution in last summer of coming amongst your friends. North in power, Hillsborough now Secretary of State to America—two from whom some good might be produced. . . .

It is found necessary to take in some part of the opposition: they have judged it best to be the Bedford party. The consequence is—Lord Weymouth, Sec. of State, in room of Conway.

Lord Hillsborough, 3^d Sec. of State for America, £4,000 a year.

Lord Gower, President of the Council.

Lord Sandwich, joint Post Master, in room of Hillsborough.

Rigby, joint Treasurer of Ireland.

Lord Charles Spencer may be one of the Admiralty if he pleases.

These are the principal changes. Only Lord Gower has kissed hands last Wednesday: the rest not to do so till after the holidays.

Duke of Bedford has undergone the operation of Baron Wesinfield of extracting the crystalline humor from his eyes. They have been bound up the proper time after it, and now the bandage is off he that was quite blind sees perfectly well.

Lord Spencer is determined to harass the two earls at Northampton, and money without end will be spent. Lord Howe's brother has no chance: Lady Northampton's dying has occasioned so great grief to her lord that he cannot prevail [on] himself to go to Castle Ashby. Lord Halifax is at Horton. Your brother [is] there also, but on Lord Rothes' death, Duke Gloucester has his regiment, and all were to be presented to him last Monday. You never mention Mount Vesuvius no more than if you were not there.

My dear Jack, wishes of all health and happiness attend you from your truly affect.

LETTER LXXXVIII

[Lord Bolingbroke's divorce, which was a complete separation carried out by act of Parliament, is recorded as doubtful of issue in a preceding letter (see p. 137). He was a nephew of the famous Bolingbroke (the friend of Pope). Lady Diana, his wife, was eldest daughter to the 2d Duke of Marlborough; she had considerable position as a watercolorist in her day—Horace Walpole, among

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others, made a little collection of her work. Topham Beauclerk (the friend of Dr. Johnson), who somewhat prided himself on being a descendant on the left of Charles II, was the gallant in the case; he married "Lady Di" two days after the divorce, and with singular promptitude reduced her to a state of domestic misery (see Boswell's "Johnson" for May 7, 1773, and Hill's note).]

CHARLES STREET, 9 Feb. 1768

MY DEAR JACK,—I fretted to be obliged to disappoint your expectations of a letter by last Friday's post. . . . Your brother hurried away to Northampton. I hope some time next month we shall be taken out of our boiling water. We have as yet no fear of losing the victory. . . . *March 1.* . . . The Parliament now fixed to be dissolved the 10th of this month. . . . Lord Bolingbroke's divorce is passed, and my lady is to marry Beauclerk at once. . . . *April 12.* —Your brother's letter to you *poste restante* at Turin will acquaint you of his success at Northampton. 'Tis thought the losing game to Lord Spencer is at least £50,000, but he will dip farther, and try a vexatious petition to the House. You will hardly credit it when I tell you Wilkes is chose for Middlesex, and such a madness reigns, all the town is lighted up on the occasion. . . . So changed is everything since you left us that you have no more notion of our government [and] party connections, than if you were a native of Italy who had hardly ever read of this country. . . . Even the very ladies are changed in dress and behavior—much, very much, for the worse. . . . By my continual attacks you will find me as much changed as all other things. Thank God I am very well resigned to my approaching end, and have no attachment to this world, except your brother and yourself.

You must forget you come from palaces at Naples. We will do our best to accommodate you when you return, my dear Jack.

Y^r truly affect. . . .

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER LXXXIX

CHARLES STREET, May 3rd 1768

MY DEAR JACK,—Your brother desires me to write this post to say he hopes you will not suffer your servant to bring over anything to sell here. He shall be obliged to give his word for that. . . .

The Parliament is to meet next Tuesday. Lord Spencer enters his petition against your brother then. The trouble and solicitation is not to be conceived: ten times more than the election. The merits of the cause is certainly with us, but in the House of Commons there is no guarding against power that transforms numbers and merits into what shape they please. We have most of the leading interest with us. Ladies enter into this affair, and Lady Spencer obtains all the *belles esprits* to fight their cause, as she thinks the men cannot resist them. . . .

LETTER XC

LONDON, September 8, 1768

MY DEAR JACK,—By the dreadful accounts of desolation in and about London, which you will read in the newspapers, which are very exactly related, you may wish to have the truth of, I scribble this to acquaint you that you may depend on what you read in them, and therefore I need not



repeat: only add that my kitchen and offices below were three or four feet deep in water. People who keep exact accounts of the weather say more rain fell that day than in the usual course falls in a month. All the land springs have rise to a degree not remembered by anyone. I received a letter from your brother today, who says the Wapineers and seamen are so riotous on the river that a guard has been obliged to be kept there for the last ten days. Sure it is a pretty state of things when the lower orders contend against authority!

My best respects wait on Lord Halifax, with the affectionate good wishes of yours,

S. O.

1771 - 1773

LETTER XCI

Bushey was the residence of Lord Halifax. He died on June 8, 1771, when the peerage became extinct. ["Your sister," referred to in this letter, is the wife of Sir George Osborn. He had married, earlier in this same year, Elizabeth, eldest daughter of John Banister. She died in March, 1773.]

April 30, 1771

MY DEAR JACK,—Your brother has been at Bushey ever since Sunday with your uncle. He will not let him out of his sight. Inflammation on the liver. Dr. Thomas carried down Sir Clifton Wintringham Sunday evening, who stayed all night.

May 3^d.—Your brother's letter will inform you of the



dangerous situation your uncle has been in: indeed, I fear consequences from it. . . . I do not like jaundice—you know my fear, and called me a croaker. I am very unlucky, however, in my foresights. Your uncle let your brother come to town for a few hours yesterday, and says he hopes he may be able to be removed to George Street next Monday if no relapse. Old age comes on apace with us all, and then what pain and grief is our life.

Your sister has set with me all this last week, as not proper to be out while your uncle [is] so ill. She sent her excuse to Marlborough House, which she bore very well, but I painted his being a father, and not a common uncle, and his public character also demanded a particular decency. . . .

LETTER XCII

December 18, 1771

MY DEAR JACK,—I conclude you have met in the newspapers with the extraordinary movement of a bog or morass at Solway beyond Durham, of twelve acres which lifted itself up three feet and fell again and did so several times, and several days, after which it floated itself off, and covered all the field, even passed over a river, and covered land on the other side. Sir Gilbert Eliot and others who are come from Scotland have seen it. None can account for it, only say it is the greatest phenomenon that has been known.

April 21, 1772

This town dressed for the holidays, but dismal in this weather. Good Friday snowed all day: no comfortable sun yet. . . .

July 25, 1772

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



Here is a strange flurry to save the national bank of Scotland, by a bank set up at Ayr: Duke of Buccleugh, Duke Queensberry, and a list of two hundred subscribers, and they grant annuities £800 for two lives. All the single ladies are distracted about it, and the topic of all conversation turns on this, but prudent people fear the security, for the lords' and others' estates are most of them entailed: when they die they cannot bind their heirs, and then what security? The lawyers' opinions are all against it: they think it a very great risk; therefore one knows not what to advise any friend to do. So great an advantage bespeaks a snake in the grass somewhere or other, and [it] will turn out a bank in air.

The weather has been most exceedingly hot, but Heaven is kind in sending refreshing cooling showers, and 'tis thought by coming in this moderate manner that there will be plenty of grain in the field, and fruits in the garden. . . . Only Sister Byng and numbers of card-playing widows are in town, [so] that often days pass with me without seeing any mortal. If I could read, write and work as I could till very lately, my time would not hang heavy

July 6, 1773

Lord North is now in full fatigue at Oxford, where he is, or will be, chose Chancellor. I think he has passed a disagreeable winter: the papers treat him with great abuse, but I fancy he stands very firm. There is such a want of abilities and such dissipation in living that there is no one to step forth that can succeed to any employment. Lord Chesterfield is come, but I have not yet heard anything with regard to his own affairs, for this town is now too empty to

be informed of anything worth noting. I pass days without seeing any one worth conversing with, so that time passes but heavily, but what can one expect otherways at eighty? Swift's Brobdingnags sets that time of life in a miserable light, and can make no one wish to have it prolonged. I am so far happy, that when the release comes, I leave none behind that can want me, and my stay here can only be a clog on those I love.

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



LETTER XCIII

This last letter is written after the birth of Sarah's great-grandson, afterwards Sir John Osborn.

17 July 1773

MY DEAR GEORGE,—Next to your brother and yourself this little sensible boy takes a deep hold in my heart, and my prayers are constant that he may be a blessing and comfort to you equal to that you have been to me. I am ever full of a thankful remembrance of God's goodness to me in the most essential point of life, to have been made happy, and very uncommon to be so two generations together. I trust it will extend to the third, in which you may be the partaker of the choicest blessings Heaven can bestow, and that your son will be a worthy member of his family.

*In Campton Church, Beds., the following inscription is to
be seen on the monument of Sarah Byng Osborn:*

LETTERS
OF
SARAH
BYNG
OSBORN



THE HONB^{le} MRS. OSBORN,
WIFE TO JOHN OSBORN, ESQ.,
AND ONLY DAUGHTER TO THE ADMIRAL
LORD VISCOUNT TORRINGTON.
BORN IN OCT. 1693 AND DIED IN NOV^r 1775.
SHE WAS A WOMAN
OF UNCOMMON ABILITIES AND UNDERSTANDING
WHO MANAGED THE WHOLE BUSSINESS
OF THIS ESTATE
IN THE TWO MINORITIES
OF HER SON AND GRANDSON,
SIR DANVERS AND SIR GEORGE OSBORN.

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There is no Past, so long as Books shall live.

—SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

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